

MODERN NEWSPAPER TRAITS AND POLICIES

by

Myles F. Pember, Jr.

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Approved by:

Josephine Burnham
Instructor in charge.

William S. Johnson
Chairman of Dept.

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PREFACE

Modern Newspaper Traits and Policies is intended to show various new tendencies in newspaper writing and publishing and several ways in which newspaper style differs from that of other types of English prose. That great advancement in the field of journalism has been made in recent years seems indisputable, and it follows that such a vital use of the English language surely should have produced some new features. Each newspaper is produced in speedy fashion, but along such lines that every employee knows his part well. The reporter is often called upon to write a story very hurriedly. He accomplishes his task because he follows set standards and fits his writing to certain more or less well established formulas, as will be shown in the thesis.

By its very nature, the newspaper story is, in a sense, turned around, for the climax is placed first, and then the events leading up to the climax are enumerated. However, the chief differences between newspaper English and most other kinds of English style are marked only in the first paragraph. This thesis represents an attempt to show these differences and explain them, apart from the rule that the climax of a news story must be given in the opening sentence. Various examples are adduced to show the tremendous influence wielded by the headline writer as he reduces news of greatest importance to the smallest space possible and thus gives arbitrary meaning to old words and provides for introduction of

new and different words into the language. Influence of the news story and the length to which the news writer goes in presentation of news to the public are also discussed; color and personality in news stories, relatively new features of newspaper style, are illustrated. A discussion of the newspaper of the future also is attempted.

Data given herewith are taken at random, but in most respects newspaper front pages are similar. The newspapers consulted are listed in the Appendix to the Bibliography. Defense of the random selections may be made by stating that, if a leading newspaper in the East, one from the Middle West, and another from California show similar influences, then newspaper writing in general must follow certain more or less well defined rules indicated by their tendencies. If the Boston Transcript and the Hutchinson News show similarities in presentation of news, it is pretty certain that hundreds of other newspapers are also following these tendencies. A perfect cross section of all kinds of newspapers in the United States could not be made except by showing examples from all kinds of newspapers in all cities and towns of the country. But when a small Middle Western newspaper and an Eastern newspaper of accepted merit in their respective districts show the same points of style, one may say such traits are general. Every example presented in this thesis has parallels in newspapers, both large and small. Evidence of the similarity of tendencies in writing may be gleaned by examination of

syndicated material, as well as Associated Press, United Press, and other press association matter, which is printed with scarcely any changes in all sections of the country. Indeed, the matters studied are not confined to America, for there is much similarity in style between England and the United States, as pointed out in various articles in Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage.

Certain writers believe newspaper style is the welding link between the style of literary writing and the style of speaking; therefore, any examples of newspaper style should be of value. One says: "The influence of the newspaper both in the United States and Great Britain does what it can to prevent any widening of the breach between the unduly fastidious language of the library and the casually careless language of the sidewalk."¹ Another believes that "The American Newspaper, the English colonial press, and in a measure the press of the United Kingdom have been hospitable and ready to accept the illegitimate verbal offspring of the street, born on the wrong side of the blanket of scholarship and the printing press."²

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1 Matthews, Brander, Essays on English, "Newspaper English," page 124.

2 Williams, Talcott, The Newspaper Man, page 105.

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CHAPTER I

IMPORTANCE OF NEWSPAPER LEADS¹

The number and importance of persons involved and their relation to the readers of the daily newspaper have much to do with the first few words of an important newspaper story.² Characteristic phrases form the identification of those persons, and the newspaper hastens to show some connection between them and those who read the story. Once in a while the connection is almost as remote as the fact that both are human.

Whether a fire story reports damage of a few hundred or a million dollars, it is of utmost importance that the first few words indicate how many lives were lost in the blaze. Next are names of those persons. If no lives were lost, then the number of injured is of interest. Even those endangered may be mentioned.

Famous personages whose names appear frequently in news stories are often identified by the fact which makes the reader at once acquainted with them. Jimmy Walker is usually identified by the phrase "dapper mayor of New York," George Herman (Babe) Ruth is almost always given some such sobriquet as "Sultan of Swat," and King George V is identified as an "enemy of "Big Bill" Thompson," and vice versa; indeed, scarcely any man's name appears in the newspaper without some such appellation. Admiral Byrd's name is

1 Leads are opening paragraphs or sentences.

2 A newspaper story is any narrative suitable for the front page. It must be news.

always followed by something as descriptive as "conqueror of the Atlantic and both the polar wastes;" Charles Lindbergh is known as "the first to fly the Atlantic alone;" and Charles Chaplin is "the funny little man of the movies."

For those of lesser fame the newspapers have recourse to other methods of identification. Titles are often sufficient to show why certain men figure in a news story, even though the title may mean little to the reader. If the title is of great importance, it may precede the name; otherwise, it probably will follow. The style will usually show "Governor Clyde M. Reed," but "H.H. Jones, first assistant secretary, Odd Fellows' lodge." Newspapers speak of "Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon." Identifications of those named in the news frequently are made merely by means of appositives. The device is particularly fitted to newspaper use, for it does away with the necessity for a clause. The identification, further, may be a series of appositive phrases. Sometimes the added appositives help to explain preceding appositives, and considerable space may be conserved.

Age and place of residence frequently serve to identify certain types. Extreme youth or old age figuring in a news story is usually given prominence. Place of residence is noted in a local story³ unless the story concerns a particularly prominent character. Ages of criminals and nearly all others who figure in court cases are presented in the story. Perhaps one of the most widely used types of identification is that of showing the relation of names

³ Local stories originate within a newspaper's trade territory.

within the story to those of nationally prominent figures. Sometimes the identification is made through several such connections. Any distant relative of John D. Rockefeller may attain temporary nationwide prominence in the news, even though he himself need do very little in order to reach such a pinnacle.

Very often the identification itself may be the real news; and in many cases it is a part of the news. An Associated Press dispatch⁴ from Oklahoma City on April 7, 1931, reads: "Hutton Bellah, former Oklahoma publisher who yesterday committed suicide at Yuma, Arizona, where he was known as Bill Lee, editor of the Yuma Sentinel, planned death because of financial and family difficulties, he indicated in a letter received today by Lew H. Wentz, multi-millionaire Ponca City oil man." Similar is a staff correspondent's story to the Parsons Sun from St. Louis, March 29: "The appointment of George C. Smith, for the past three and a half years director of the Industrial Bureau of the Industrial Club of St. Louis and a nationally known industrial development figure, as general traffic manager of the Missouri-Kansas-Texas railroad was characterized today by M. H. Cahill, president of the railroad, as an event of major significance to the entire Southwest." Very much involved is this type of identification, and no doubt its chief recommendation is that it conserves space.

The young news writer is given instructions to be brief and reach the point as soon as possible; he may be referred for a model

⁴ A dispatch is a story sent the newspaper from some point outside the city.

to the story of the Creation told in the book of Genesis. He must include as many answers as are necessary to the questions expressed in when, where, what, who, and possibly how and why. If in the opening paragraph (or the opening sentence, if possible) those points are included, he may be reasonably sure that enough information is given as a start for his story. In seeking to make these facts compact, the writer must become accustomed to all possible methods for compression. Any device, although grammatically cumbersome, may serve as an aid to the reporter. Strictly speaking, the questions are to be answered in the order of their importance in the story at hand. Since the time and place are rarely of more importance than the act or the doer, they should logically come last, but they are not always so placed. The theory that all of these questions must be answered in the lead is, moreover, becoming less and less positive. In the more individual, colorful, and entertaining types of newswriting, it is likely to be almost entirely disregarded.

It is so important to make news personal that the noun lead predominates in most news stories. Probably it occurs most frequently because it is the most natural and straightforward style to use. However, reporters follow various stereotyped forms. Their purpose has been to vary the monotony of noun leads, but even they often become monotonous. Certainly they are convenient as devices for simplifying what is to be written and they make it possible to present much in a few words. The noun type of lead, most common of all, as I have said, usually carries the name of

the person involved, what he does, when and where, and possibly how and why he does it. An example is a March 28 dispatch by the Associated Press from Topeka: "Leonard Wuthrich, 24, Topeka, was charged today with first degree murder in connection with the fatal shooting last November of J. Fred O'Daniel, Pottawatomie county official and farmer."

Probably the most common form of lead next to the noun variety is the with type, arising from the desire to reduce predication. The idea expressed is not often one of accompaniment, such as with suggests, but exactly the opposite. The University Daily Kansan on February 10 used this lead: "With Bill Johnson, regular center, and Filkin, a capable reserve, in bed with the flu, Kansas will attempt to stop the Iowa State basketball team tonight, etc." Another is an Associated Press dispatch of April 4 from Franklin, Ky.: "With basketball a dead issue and baseball rapidly gaining momentum, the high schools of Franklin and Bowling Green, Ky., presented a football game for their avid publics." In the case of a partially completed campaign of some kind or another, with as a lead is indeed convenient. A paragraph from the March 15 Kansas City Star says: "With two Kansas City orators already selected for the city-wide finals in the national high school oratorical contest sponsored in Missouri and Kansas by the Star, plans are being formulated for many more elimination contests within the next month." The March 22 Parsons Sun produces: "With two additional entries from Kansas high schools, the dairy judging contest of vocational students to be held at Parsons next Wednesday becomes by far the

largest event of its kind held in the state, etc." The University Daily Kansan on March 29 shows: "With the battle for Hill supremacy in politics drawing nearer every day, three of the four parties now in the field issued statements today to clarify their stand on the situation."

Variety of style may be produced in any kind of writing by means of participle leads, but they are particularly recommended to the news writer. Sometimes a participle lead is convenient in treatment of a story in which the performer is of less importance than the act. From the March 29 Topeka Capital may be cited: "Contending that a motor car company is partly to blame when an accident occurs while an employee is teaching a person how to drive, Frank Ford, 1010 Brooks avenue, made the Wood Motors Company, and Mrs. H. E. Wolfe, 301 Broadmoor avenue, defendants in a \$7,500 damage suit in the district court yesterday." Often the participial phrase may bring the story up to date, as in the following March 20 Associated Press dispatch from Lawrence, Kansas: "Following the arrest early in February of Edward Tate and George Tooley, university students from Kansas City charged with transportation of liquor and now free on bond pending a district court trial in May, university leaders and fraternity presidents agreed to cooperate in stamping out the use of liquor on the campus and in the fraternity and rooming houses." A March 17 story in the Topeka Capital says: "Declaring that so far as personal political fortunes are concerned, he has no objection to being a candidate at large, though he might decide to be a candidate for the senate should

reapportionment fail, Congressman Harold McGugin said it is the obvious duty of the legislature to redistrict the state."

A gerund lead is shown in an Associated Press dispatch from Tulsa, Oklahoma, on March 27: "Freezing a fire to death with soda water, as the flames, driven by a 100-mile-an-hour gale lash back at the fabric of an airplane 10,000 feet above the earth, is the possibility of the near future disclosed by exhibits in connection with the national airport conference in session here." The participle or gerund type, however, is found in smaller proportion than other special leads. Possibly the participle is not so convenient as the other stereotyped forms which aid in gaining variety with a saving of space and time. The with type may be carried to such an extreme as reached in an April 8 story in the Parsons Sun, which, in addition, offers a good example of the run-down⁵ lead: "With minor Katy officials assuming authority to instruct employees to vote for P. T. Foley for mayor late yesterday, Mr. Foley's chances for election, which had seemed waning in the late hours of the campaign, took new life and indications were today that the mayoralty results will be close at the end of a beautiful day that has brought out the full voting strength of the city." If not run-down, this at least abounds in irrelevancy. Hardly anyone but a reporter would write such a sentence.

That seems to be a convenient introduction, especially where

⁵ Run-down leads are those in which many added phrases and clauses make the sentence cumbersome. The term may be applied to any sentence which is heavily encumbered with added phrases and clauses which might well be placed in additional sentences.

the action of an organization is of more importance than the body itself; where an important conclusion has been reached and can best be expressed before the names of those who reached it; and where the real news is a disclosure and not the names of the persons who made the revelation. An example is an Associated Press dispatch of March 13: "A theory that the burned body of a man buried here February 3 as John M. Smith, farmer-labor candidate for governor in 1930, was not that of Smith was being investigated today at the request of insurance companies with which Smith carried \$50,000 worth of policies." From the Kansas City Times of March 29 is taken: "That so many robbers recently have had a dose of their own medicine is hardly an occasion for regret." The Lawrence Journal-World of March 28 says: "That Fred Burke, alias Richard F. White, notorious machine gun killer held in St. Joseph, Mo., may have attempted to purchase a machine gun in Lawrence was revealed here today." A that clause which contains the most important part of a story is singled out for a lead in the Journal-World of the same date: "That money was available at all times during the past year, in the face of depression, to meet demands for good loans, was reported by the secretary at the annual meeting of the shareholders of the Lawrence Building and Loan Association, which was held in the offices of the association last evening." A that clause is quite likely to lead to a run-down sentence, as the preceding lead clearly shows.

One of the commonest of introductions is the quotation lead, most often found adding to the clutter of the run-down variety.

Here is a lead from the University Daily Kansan of March 26: "'He is, I think, one of the most effective preachers to college audiences and appeals to all sorts of people in the audience, that is, to all types and ranges of persons,' said Chancellor E. H. Lindley today in speaking of Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes, of Chicago, who will speak on 'What Is Your Cause?' at the second of the All-University religious services at 7 o'clock Sunday evening in the auditorium." This direct quotation type lends interest to the story quite often, too, but its worth may be entirely offset if too much else, as in the Kansan story, is added.

An unusually well boiled down lead is a United Press dispatch from Kansas City, dated February 23: "Dayton Thomas, 46, of Kansas city, Kansas, shot two men to death here early today after an all night drinking party with one of the victims." The story further relates in the second paragraph who the victims were, the fact that Thomas had surrendered to the police and told his story, and how the shooting took place. In most instances all of the material would have been placed in the first paragraph and, in fact, the first sentence; for newspaper paragraphing is usually a matter of convenience for the reader's eye. Contrasted with the preceding news story is a special dispatch to the Topeka Capital on March 13: "Several carloads of members of the McPherson Chamber of Commerce, augmented by a large delegation of business men of Lindsborg, will make a trip to Topeka next Monday to call on Governor Harry Woodring in the interests of Charles W. Helstrom of this city, indorsed by civic organizations over the county and board of county commissioners

for a position on the state highway commission."

The typical lead paragraph, then, is one in which facts are compressed into the smallest space possible by means of devices which are not natural to any other kind of writing. Of course, it is well understood by the reader that no attempt is made to give him a masterpiece. The only claim of the writer is that he gives the news as briefly as possible, identifies all persons and objects connected with the news, relates them to any previous important facts on the subject, uses any convenient means of varying the story to avoid monotony, and expects the reader to round out the facts for himself, even though he has no time to read the summarizing points of the story to be found in succeeding paragraphs, which are usually written in ordinary English style and are usually chronological in sequence.

Whenever the story contains an expression of opinion, its authority must be quoted in the lead. Particular care must be exercised in this respect, especially if crime is the subject. As a matter of fact, even though the best of authority is quoted in a story, it is not proof against a libel suit in the event the person named happens to be not guilty, but newspapers make every effort to disclose the truth in such cases behind as strong a defense as they can muster to prevent "backfire." Information of extremely unusual type must bear authoritative stamp if it is to be taken seriously. The reader will believe that a scheduled meeting produced certain results, for he feels that the newspaper has had ample time to cover⁶ the event,

⁶ To cover an event is to be on the scene and write the story.

but news of the type which must be reached after the event has taken place is likely to receive closer scrutiny and attention if authority is presented to uphold the facts presented. It is not always possible to quote the authority directly. It may be that the facts are entirely accurate and yet the authority may not wish to be quoted for fear of hurting his own reputation or for some other reason. Exact authority, moreover, may not be obtainable. The reporter may fall back on one or more convenient phrases which show he has guessed at the authority, obtained the news from someone who does not give consent to its publication, or wishes to make the story seem more important by lending it authoritative backing. Government news, either local or international in character, very often requires that the writer withhold the source of his information, as shown in this United Press dispatch from London March 12: "A committee representing the United States, Britain, Japan, France, and Italy will be formed to draft a new five power naval limitations agreement, incorporating the new Franco-Italian accord, it was understood today in reliable American quarters." Numerous phrases such as "it was understood," are the result of efforts to withhold the names of those in authority. Others are "those close to the president say," "it was indicated by circles near to the governor," "several persons of authority let it be known," and "authorities agree."

In his hurry to present as much news as possible in the smallest required amount of space, the writer must have certain formulas more or less well in mind. Probably the saddest result

of his anxiety to present quantity in cramped quarters is the run-down sentence already mentioned. Although the writer must be brief throughout his story, it is especially in the lead paragraph that he must give a solid foundation for his story and virtually explain its reason for existence. He must present the outstanding facts, name and identify those connected with the event, and he must give authority. Because it is important that the key to the story be presented in the lead, he may string out his facts so that the reader, were he reading the news aloud, would quite run out of breath before reaching the conclusion. Occasionally the writer may use a periodic sentence, maintaining suspense and interest to the very close. Very often, however, the facts are presented in order of importance. Therefore, the lead sentence, because it is the one sentence of the news story most likely to violate ordinary rules of writing, may run virtually to nothingness. Pitch relations for the ear are to be considered in this connection. As the reader lowers his voice for each succeeding fact of lesser importance, he certainly is in danger of losing his breath. Examples may be cited as follows: 1---"J. F. Frazier, of Chicago, editor of the Inland Printer and a nationally known typographer, will be one of the feature speakers at the Middle West district conference of the International Association of Printing house craftsmen in Topeka, March 16, Robert Maxwell, general chairman in charge of arrangements for the district conference here, announced yesterday" (Topeka Capital, March 9). 2---"Parachute flares, each of which throws a brilliant light of more than 1,000,000 candlepower, will

lend a touch of realism to the mock night raid upon New York City, to be delivered by 35 army air corps bombarding planes at 11 p.m., May 22, as a phase of the annual army air corps exercises to be staged along the Atlantic coast in which 670 planes will take part" (Springfield Republican, May 10). 3---"The three University of Kansas students released on bond in the Douglas county district court, charged with possession and transportation of intoxicating liquor, will remain in school at present with no announcement of any decision in their case being made by the university, pending disposition of the court case, it was announced in a signed statement today by Chancellor E. H. Lindley and Professor Henry Worner, men's student adviser" (Kansas City Star dispatch from Lawrence, Kansas, March 28). 4---"The Graham-Paige Motors Corporation and the three Graham brothers have filed their answer in the suit entered in Detroit in the United States district court by the Chrysler Corporation, which claims that the defendants have manufactured and sold buses and trucks in violation of an agreement made between the Grahams and the Dodge company, which is now owned by Chrysler" (Topeka Capital, March 29). 5---"Since William Miller, known as 'Bill the Killer,' and Charles Arthur Floyd have been named as the probable killers of the Ash brothers, who were taken for a 'ride,' presumably because they were suspected of 'stooling' to the police, news has leaked to the police from the underworld linking the name of Miller with the robbery of the National Bank and Trust Company of North Kansas City last September 3" (Kansas City Times, March 28).

It is often necessary to link news of today with previous happenings, and here again the reporter is likely to fall into a trap which will produce a run-down or at least an awkward sentence. Sometimes, however, the effect is dramatic, as in this story from Pratt, Kansas, to the Kansas City Star on March 20: "An incessant search with nothing but a .38 caliber bullet as a clue, that was taken from the body of George H. Atchison, prominent business man of Pratt, who was shot to death the night of January 14, last, has solved the mysterious murder of the man and brought success to Alfred Williams, county attorney, young official of Pratt county." A special dispatch to the Topeka Capital on March 10 shows an extreme use of identification of the person involved in the news, as well as connecting the facts of the news at hand with what has gone before: "Dr. J. E. Ackert, professor of zoology and chairman of the graduate council of the Kansas State Agricultural College, who, with Mrs. Ackert and daughter Jane, is spending the year in Cambridge, England, addressed the Cambridge Philosophical society, February 6, on 'The Social and Political Influence of the Hookworm Disease in America During the Past Sixty Years.'" An April 11 Kansas City Star paragraph is: "Raymond Thomas, 13-year-old Negro, on parole from juvenile court in Kansas City, Kansas, for stealing two motor cars, last night was arrested in a motor car belonging to Guy Stanley, general manager of the Woods Brothers Corporation, by F. S. Bailey and Harry Robbs, patrolmen, when they saw the youth driving on Kansas avenue." In this paragraph the reporter clearly identifies four persons, and gives previous information regarding the person charged with

the crime. No doubt much space is conserved, the reading public has become used to the formula, and the result is probably all that both the hurrying writer and hurrying reader desire. Stories which may demand front page space for several days running nearly always contain certain qualifying statements in the lead, and these add to the burden of the writer in presenting his follow-up story.⁷

It is worth while to note that there may be exceptions to the common varieties of front page leads, particularly as regards the new treatment of human interest or feature stories. A new type of lead and new methods of treatment of these human interest tales are to be found today. Whereas the newspapers a short time ago resorted to special sized type, special headlines, special boxes,⁸ or other methods of presentation, it is now very common to find no such special treatment, with the headline possibly excepted. One method used to indicate that a human interest story is to follow is the use of the "want-ad" lead, which indicates that suspense is to be held until the close of the story. The following paragraph is taken from the Kansas City Journal-Post of March 8: "Does anyone know where the Kansas City, Kansas, police department can obtain one good alarm clock at a reasonable figure? The clock must be a good one, because if it isn't more than one will be needed, and somebody must stay awake to see that they are kept wound." In this story one may be sure that

⁷ A follow-up is a story containing new developments of a topic appearing in earlier editions of the newspaper.

⁸ Boxes inclose stories by various kinds of border lines.

the climax will be withheld until near the close. The reader may detect that the story is a feature or human interest by the fact that first and second person are used in a story over which there is no by-line.⁹ It may be a story which will be of interest to a majority of readers, and yet for its intrinsic news value probably would not be given space in the newspapers. However, it is not a type to be confused with the story of color or personality which, although without great importance as news, takes its rank because of universal general importance. This type will be discussed in a later chapter.

It may be given in criticism that too often reporters strive to give color and vitality to their opening paragraphs and utterly fail to continue these features in the body of the story. Perhaps they do try to tell too much, but it is a fact that the reader seldom needs to travel beyond the first paragraph to get the gist of the story. He usually has in a news story's opening paragraph all he needs to tell him of the nature of the story.

⁹ A by-line is simply the name of the author of the story.

CHAPTER II

HEADLINES: THEIR EFFECT ON NEWSPAPER STYLE

Newspaper English is most typical in the headline. Any device which may be used to express deeds by means of words is acceptable in a newspaper, though the prime requisites are that headline words be short, with as much meaning as possible. Exceptions must be made because newspaper columns and type have exact measurements which require as many substitutions as the headline writer needs to make. Prepositions are usually short words, and the headline-writer, who is also a copy-reader,¹ uses them to the fullest extent. Infinitives express meanings in shorter form than finite tenses; hence their wide use. The copy-reader also learns a great number of so-called "trick" newspaper words; he draws extensively from his bag of synonyms; in fact, he has built up a sort of headline idiom. Strictly speaking, headline English is difficult to understand, but the reader seems to be able to take a great deal for granted; he knows that he is playing a game with the headline writer, and all seem to be well satisfied. The hasty reader may scan the headlines and call that a day's reading. Probably this is what often happens.

The reader knows that the headline-writer, as well as the writer of the story, wishes to bring the facts down to the last possible minute before the newspaper goes to press. Hence, there

¹ Copy-readers edit news stories and write accompanying headlines.

exists virtually only one tense in the newspaper--the present. The reader through constant practice learns to expand, yet some headlines remain puzzling or meaningless. Still the reader is usually able to learn from the headline whether the story is likely to be of interest to him. So much the copy-reader can tell, though he be restricted to a single line head and possibly to three short words in which to indicate the character of the story. Any novel device for brevity the writer is almost certain to follow, the reader of course trailing, though not at a great distance, in this great game of learning what is happening in the world in the shortest time the lesson may require.

An obvious aid to brevity is the omission of articles and unnecessary adjectives. In all probability the headline writers had little difficulty in making their first discoveries. But the headline is not an old development. It is still a mark of country papers that the headline counts for very little, while on the metropolitan newspapers the headline counts for much, and many workers spend much time in their composition. However, much more than merely discarding adjectives and articles was necessary to produce the typical headlines of the metropolitan newspapers.

The lengths to which headline writers will sometimes go in order to accomplish one of several designs are almost immeasurable. It may be said that any word which expresses an idea in English may be used by the headline writer. He may cut down, add to, or create new words in various ways; he may use any kind of slang which happens to be current or even that which seems obsolete; and he may abbreviate in almost any manner he sees fit. He may use foreign words,

even though they may not be in current English usage. However, he is expected to remain as close as possible to something which is within the sphere of the reader's experience. Only infrequently does he compel the reader to go farther than the headlines to grasp the gist of the story. Numerous headlines found in one locality probably would be meaningless when read by a resident of a distant locality. Perhaps nothing is quite so familiar to the reader as the leading newspaper of his own community; yet, let him travel, and he will find the newspapers rather strange. He may be forced to translate the headlines, particularly those which deal with local affairs. Possibly the same is true of the subject matter treated in the respective stories to be found in the newspaper.

Prepositions abound in headlines. The commoner prepositions are short, and a preposition plus its object, usually a short noun, may say a great deal more than is expected of it in ordinary prose. On newspapers whose chief headlines are but one line in length, even greater use is made of the prepositional phrase, and an average count of headlines shows that prepositions are to be found in nearly three-fourths of them. One may see a confusion of prepositions in this extremely heavy use. When a two-letter word is needed to fill a line rather than a four-letter word, prepositions sometimes are used indiscriminately, one for the other. It is no stretch of the imagination for the reader to realize what is happening, and, once he has seen the change, he feels no bewilderment at meeting it again. Sometimes there is no actual confusion of prepositions, but the copy-reader implies a meaning other than the natural one. A Kansas City Star headline of April 15 reads: "New Hope to Drought Areas." For would not have fitted the line, and so the copy-reader

assumed that the reader would supply "is given" after "hope" rather than the more natural "there is" at the beginning. A Topeka Capital headline of March 11 was "Dry League Praises Attitude by Hoover." Here the writer implies "taken," but no implication would be necessary if he had used "of" instead of "by." No space is saved, but the tendency is clearly shown to utilize prepositions thus with implication of words or phrases. "Frills to Quakers Now" is a Kansas City Star headline of April 7. For would not have fitted the line. A Kansas City Times headline of April 5 says "Ahead on Merger" rather than with, which would have been more natural but would not have fitted the designated space in the headline. A Topeka Capital headline was "Sloan is Named on the Kansas Supreme Bench." Doubtless a better preposition than on might be used. A Boston Transcript headline of April 10 was: "Fish Dealers Tell of Graft to Racketeers," and both of and to show the use of short words for about and given to. A Kansas City Star headline of April 6 refers to Senator Bingham as "Cool to a Tax Increase." Here toward would have been the natural preposition. To is substituted and then the line is not full enough. Consequently, the copy-reader simply inserts the indefinite article, ordinarily not used in the headlines. The Kansas City Times of March used "Debate on Spire for Rheims." A Topeka Capital headline on March 28 made use of "Hearing Hinges Around Paying of Royalties." Around fits the line, but on or upon would not have been suitable in length. From the same newspaper on April 6 is taken "Critical Fans Await for Season's Opening."

It was in two lines, and if for had been omitted, the second line would have been too short; if wait had been used for await another short line would have resulted. A Kansas City Times headline of April 7 reads: "Quibble on Speed;" probably over would ordinarily be used, though it would not fit the assigned space. Occasionally the preposition itself is omitted in the headline, especially when the meaning is not changed by such omission. The Salina Journal furnishes this example: "Youth Says Not Guilty Murder of Salina Man." In one instance of was omitted in order that the line might fit; in the next it was not omitted for the same reason. Privileges of this type are often granted the copy-reader.

The extremely wide use of the prepositional phrase has much to do with the omission of both nouns and verbs, as well as other parts of speech, in the headline. Verbs, especially, can be suggested by means of prepositional phrases. In and to probably have wider headline usage than any other words in the language. They express so many ideas by their ordinary and their adopted uses that verbs, as far as tense is concerned, have only slight usage in the headlines as compared with what might naturally be expected of them. In probably has a wider use than to, though each appears very frequently to replace to make or to do. Perhaps the ease with which it may be used is responsible for its being employed so frequently by copy-readers. Some characteristic headlines follow: "Democrat Women in Demand Raskob Quit as Chairman" (Salina Journal, April 15); "Salina Banks in a Merger" (Kansas City Times, March 28);

"Former Chief in Pledge to Quiet Rackets" (Topeka Capital, March 29); "In Lecture Thursday" (Lawrence Journal-World, April 7); "Held in Car Theft" (Parsons Sun, March 28); "10-Year Term in Troost Ave. Bank Robbery" (Kansas City Journal-Post, April 6); "Guilty in Wreck Plot" (Kansas City Star, April 6); "Indict Two in Mail Fraud" (Kansas City Times, April 11).

The use of to as a preposition has a wide range of possibilities. Verbs of motion may be omitted because of the use of to, especially in such cases as this example from the Kansas City Star of April 4: "Ruggles Will to Court." "To Honor Society" is a headline in the Lawrence Journal-World on March 27. The story shows that the meaning of the headline is that several students have been elected to the society. Such headlines as "Scouts to Ottawa," from the Journal-World of May 2, are very common. Any movement of persons or organizations may be told in the headlines without requiring a verb. A March 23 headline in the Parsons Sun says "City Primary Campaign to a Quiet Close." A frequently used method of indicating a death is to speak of "the end to" the person named. The Kansas City Times on April 7 used the headline "The End to 'Bill Wiggins'" and on March 28 "End to Barnard." The Lawrence Journal-World on March 28 used "End to Ban Johnson."

To appears very frequently as a part of the infinitive, which is given wide headline use, as in the following examples: "Boyd to Crack Down on Tax Evaders," (Topeka Capital, March 28); "Spring Weather to Stay," (Parsons Sun, March 20); "Paid Athletes to Go,"

(Kansas City Times, March 28); "Store to Enlarge," (Parsons Sun, March 10); "Bankers to Be Called Here in the Milk Crisis," (Boston Transcript, April 11); "Candidates to Suit Exacting Offer Service," (Topeka Capital, March 29); "Amendment Urged to Give to Senate Right to Impeach," (Springfield Republican, April 13).

In the same way, short verbs are preferred. See probably has a wider headline usage than any other and in frequency of use ranks near in and to. The word may be used to replace think, believe, forecast, predict, discover, hope, and many other verbs, all of which are longer and more troublesome to the headline writer. The United States Daily on April 6 produced "Manager Plan Seen as Remedy for City," and in another headline used "Secret Profit Seen on Rent Paid to City." Still another--all three were on the same front page--was "Sees Bus Deal Scandal." A March 22 headline in the Kansas City Star was "Walton Defeat Is Seen." An example from its March 28 issue is "Hyde Sees Lower Yield," and another, on April 6, is "Two Visitors See Cheer and Gloom in America." The extremely wide use of see is particularly due to the fact that many newspaper stories develop from the observations of those who supposedly are competent to determine probable results from existing situations. These observations may be either predictions of what is to take place or judgments based upon what has transpired from the actions of groups of people in important gatherings. Similar to see is hold, which may be used in many of the same ways as see. It may mean believe in the sense that a

certain official holds a certain condition is likely to result. Further, hold has wide uses in stories of crime, in which, of course, various persons are detained as suspected of being guilty of wrongdoing.

Cutting down long words is one of the chief methods of preparing headlines, and not many words prove strong enough to withstand the copyreader's onslaughts if there exists a possibility of cutting the length. Particularly words which have been created from two or more words are mutilated by the copyreader. In almost all cases where he finds his space limited, he will make half a word do for a whole if a semblance of meaning remains. Common examples are words cut down from airplane, bicycle, submarine, and automobile. The resulting words are usually stems of the longer word, though prefixes and suffixes may rarely be used. For many years a policeman has been known as a copper, and that name has been reduced to cop. There are other short names for policemen, though perhaps those terms are best classified under slang in the headlines. One class of persons with whom cops have had dealings within the last decade are known as bootloggers, and that name has been shortened by the March 14 Topeka Capital in the headline "Alleged 'Logger' Slain." Obviously the reduction of the word by omitting the first syllable has saved space and made it possible to cover much in the short headline. The same newspaper presents a headline "Blue SWIM Team Loses Meet to Missouri A. C." This use

of swim may not be an entirely novel one, but it does open the way for similar breaking down of words to ease the tasks of the copy-reader. The same newspaper uses spar instead of sparring in this headline of March 21: "Spar Partner to Hospital." May not one expect, then, to find bowling, vaulting, and other sport terms similarly reduced? Explosives with long technical names hold no fears for the rapid-working copy-reader. The Topeka Capital on March 29 cuts nitroglycerine in this manner: "Nitro Thief Dies as 400 quarts 'Let Go.'" Zepplin has become zee, just as submarine has become sub, though one comes from a proper name and the other from a combination of Latin roots. The word Rotarian or Rotary is shortened to Roto, and the writer may shorten the names of other civic organizations if he believes that the reader will grasp the allusion. Perhaps the headline writer does not create a great many of these abbreviations and cut-down words. One example of the type he did not create is probably fag, shortened from forget, which Webster's New International Dictionary says originally meant a bundle of sticks or grass. The resemblance to cigars created the possibility of its new use. "Gang Wrecks Third Bookie" is taken from the April 6 Kansas City Journal-Post. Bookie is slang for bookmaker. Omnibus was cut to bus, probably before the headline writer had cause to use the word, but he quickly grasped it, and now the word is a good one. A Boston Transcript headline of April 18 contained "Carol Becomes Ruman Dictator." Either Ruman is a word in good standing in Europe or it is

deliberately cut down from Roumanian by the copy-reader. There is no doubt as to what he means, and his limited space would have permitted use of no other word.

In the same issue of that newspaper is a headline "Pan-Europa Plan Grows Sturdy." Doubtless the form is easily understandable, though Pan-European is the naturally expected form. An earthquake is usually a quake in the headlines, though it may be a tremor or a tumbler.

As suggested in the preceding paragraph, various supposed synonyms are used by the copy-reader, especially when these words are shorter than the word ordinarily used in conversation or writing. Just as earthquake may have any number of shorter words as a substitute, so many other examples may be cited. A common headline word which has gained wide usage is kin, though it ordinarily exists in standard English only in such expressions as "kith and kin." Now it is used in the headlines to replace the word kinsman or kindred. The March 16 Topeka Capital printed "Vivian's Kin Collapses," "Lincoln's Kin Dead," and "Kin Fight to Keep Bennett Estate from Freed Widow." In the first two headlines one person was indicated by kin, but an entire group was indicated in the third. It is noteworthy that on the same date the Kansas City Star copy-reader produced "Bennett's Kin to Fight." It is extremely common, also, to find such words as parley, meet, and confab, because they are shorter than conference, meeting, and gathering. Move is found frequently to show almost any kind of action. An April 11 Kansas City Times copy-reader wrote "Moves on Election Fraud." Because

of the mania for investigations at the present time, newspapers frequently mention them. Unsuitable for headline usage, however, investigation is usually replaced by probe. Writers often employ the latter. Newspapers are often used by officials as a means of bluffing, warning, or informing the general public that certain measures are to be taken--measures that will either hit or rap certain classes or persons or acts which have become common. Since newspapers use this type of story frequently, both hit and rap appear often. Many personal attacks are chronicled in the newspaper, too, and these two words are convenient for use in the accompanying headline. Perhaps the officials are going to curb certain practices.

In their search for not only the shortest words to express their ideas but also the words which will fit an exact number of spaces in a headline, copy-readers do not stop with reviving obsolete and rare uses of words. Maurice Hicklin, of the Humboldt State Teachers' College, of Arcata, California, says in the December, 1930, number of American Speech that reporters "invade the realm of the poet to write isle for island, and even orb for world, as in 'Zep Due to Sail on Tour of Orb.' They turn to metaphor and write 'Canners Balk at \$80 Peach Price Demand;' to metonymy, and evolve 'Man Starts Out for Altar, Winds up Behind Bars;' to synecdoche, and devise 'Knife for Fighter' (i. e., operation for pugilist.) They descend to slang and refer to an exhibition of radio equipment as a 'mike show' (i. e., from microphone). A building is

photoed, a hero debunks his exploit, a girl fails in a suicide try, and a tennis ace gets a win. Instead of being ready to criticize the copy-readers for their manner of using words, one should be able to praise them at times for their ingenuity. Copy-readers might say to their critics what Thomas Nashe, a 'newspaper man' born several centuries too early, said to one of his critics as regards the use of 'Mummianized,' that it expressed the thought better than any other word of its brevity. Numerous further examples are given by Mr. Hicklin of the short words used as synonyms in headline writing.

Strictly new words to be found in the headlines are probably few in number. They are new only because they are cut down from other words or because they are slang, usually not invented by the headline writer, but quickly pounced upon by him. The newspaper will not hesitate to use such a word as propagandize, especially when it fits the space required. Not that propagandize is a newspaper headline creation, but it represents a type of word the headline writer is likely to use providing it fits his purpose. It is scarcely to be found elsewhere. The principal new uses in the headline, however, are new meanings for old words. Perhaps it is better to say that the headline writer uses short words to express many ideas, depending upon the sense desired at the time; and the reader must be literally "on his toes" if he is to seize at a glance what is meant. The writer hopes he will.

Slang and all other expressions which require that the reader know the technical language of a certain business or sport are properly a part of the headline writer's vocabulary. If he can put

stock market quotations in the language of baseball, if he can describe a political situation in "poker" terms, or if he can use a colorful slang expression which is much shorter than ordinary propriety would require, he is probably the better kind of copy-reader. Just how boldly he should juggle these figures, however, is a point of fine discrimination, and if he oversteps the bounds, there may be "backfire." A headline already quoted speaks of cigarettes as fags, but probably if the story had used the same substitution, the word would have been placed in quotation marks. Headlines seldom use quotation marks except in direct quotations. Such a headline as "Rum for Davy Jones's Bar," from the Kansas City Star, is one which shows not only the figure of Davy Jones, meaning the ruler of the bottom of the sea, but of rum, the shortest word in common usage which is found as a name for alcoholic liquors. Gin or rye might have been substituted, but they are usually more specific in meaning. From rum the headline writers have coined at least one new word--rummers--to name those who smuggle liquor into the United States. The Topeka Capital had a headline on March 29 "Rummers Trick Patrol, Using Sacred Sea Call." Perhaps the gangsters of Chicago themselves were responsible for the word which names them, but newspapers soon made use of the word. These outlaws are racketeers, hoodlums, or possibly stick-up men, and their businesses are called rackets or by other colorful names. A Boston Transcript headline on April 11 related how "Fish Dealers Tell of Graft to Racketeers." "Boyle Wins By Reddeal" was a headline in the April 11 Kansas City Times, the story dealing with a contract which

was awarded to Boyle after the first bids had been apparently unsatisfactory to the city and he had bid second lowest. The expression o. k. is found frequently in headlines; usually it would be considered slang in good English composition. It is sometimes spelled okay or okoh, and there are variants of both. A good example of the lengths to which copy-readers may go in using slang is a sub-headline in the Boston Transcript of April 13, reading "King Pipes Down." Reference was made to Alfonso XIII of Spain, and it was indicated that he had refused to make a statement to the press following his abdication of the Spanish throne. A sports term introduced into a headline over a story of entirely different character appeared in the Kansas City Star of February 11. It was "Nature Stymies Police," meaning that a natural law had prevented the police from seizing a quantity of booze, as the story itself indicated. The word booze is as yet uncommon in good English prose.

The matter of abbreviations is probably one of individual style with most newspapers. By style is meant that particular matter of form which the newspaper follows, according to its own desires. A permissible abbreviation in one newspaper might not be tolerated in another. Most of the common abbreviations--that is, those frequently to be found in ordinary writing--appear in all newspapers. Such a headline from the Boston Transcript of April 13 as "Tiernoy May Head Lowell Fin Comm." would probably not be permitted in numerous newspapers; it is not difficult, however, for the reader to glean that financial commission is indicated by the abbreviation. The same issue of that newspaper says "Fire Destroys

N. England Building." Obviously it is the New England Building. But a headline in the Lawrence Journal-World of March 20, "Oust N. E. League Teams at Topeka," would indicate that abbreviations have various meanings for various parts of the country. The Journal-World headline referred to Northeast. Judicious use of abbreviations, then, is about all that is required of the copy-reader. Names of states are frequently abbreviated in headlines, though they are abbreviated in good writing only under certain conditions. The Kansas City Athletic Club becomes K. C. A. C. in most headlines, and Missouri A. C. shows a shortening of similar nature. Any title of more than one word is likely to be cut down by the headline writer. Company, association, university, commission, and similar words are regularly abbreviated. The Rocky Mountain News on April 16 reduces Radio Corporation of America to R. C. A.

The idiom of the headline, recognized pretty well by the average reader, is possibly responsible for the introduction into the language of many new ways of saying old things. The idiom is created because of the fact that the copy-reader may use very few words; and because he has such a limited space in which to place them. Consequently, when he cannot find the short words, he must make substitutions, and he must make rearrangements which would not be tolerated in ordinary composition. However, after he has committed these "crimes," there is the possibility he may be copied by other writers and his headline slang may even become good

English. Omissions are common (as pointed out previously) in the headline, particularly as regards verbs. These omissions are made possible by means of the use of prepositional phrases or the implying of the verb to be. These types of omission are easily understood by the reader. "Jilted Mate a Suicide" was a Kansas City Star headline on March 20. "A Delay in Lingle Jury" shows the omission of there is and selection of or selecting. In each case a verb might have been used. "City Primary Campaign to a Quiet Close," from the March 23 Parsons Sun shows the use of the prepositional phrase to do away with the verb of motion, a very frequently used headline device. Boiling down a headline to the smallest space is found in the Kansas City Journal-Post of March 29: "Goiter Session Here." The meaning indicated is that a meeting of those experienced in treating goiters is in session or will be in Kansas City. Easily understandable, but surely poor English, is this headline from the April 11 Boston Transcript: "Lloyd George to be Broadcast Today," meaning of course that his message is to be broadcast. A Parsons Sun headline of March 27 says "Store to Enlarge," though the store is to be enlarged, the active voice supplanting the passive to save space. The meaning is clear enough, though the language is somewhat mixed. A Baltimore Sun headline of April 13 says "Women Wet Group Won't See Hoover." The combination formed by the first three words is an example of a common headline practice. Ordinarily one would write it "Women's Wet Organization," but the newspaper discards the possessive and

replaces organization by a similar word which will fit the allotted space. A Kansas City Times headline of April 8 says "Fear Cheap Oil Flood." The practice of removing a prepositional phrase and substituting a collective noun modifier is very common as a result of the effort to reduce the number of words. Especially in one-line headlines the reader will find a lone substantive with possibly a modifier or two serving to tell the brief story required of the headline. "Long Pen Sentence" is an example from the Lawrence Journal-World of April 8. Perhaps the headline writer finds his easiest task in composing a short headline when it happens that the persons named in the story are not of enough importance to warrant their being placed in the headline. Although it is a standing newspaper precept that the persons named in the story are worthy of attention, it is often possible to submerge those names. "Back O. U. Probe Move" is a typical headline, from the Kansas City Star of March 29. "Slay Man Eating Beast" is taken from the March 27 Parsons Sun. In either case, the event or the what is much more important than the persons or the who. The writer has a reason for omitting the subject of the headline sentence. "To Urge Council Clear Calendar" is from the April 21 Wichita Beacon. Here it is not difficult to see that the act is much more important than the persons or body which demands the action. The Kansas City Times of April 7 produces "Quibble on Speed." The same newspaper on April 8 has "Names New York Probers." A type of exaggeration of this tendency is taken from the Parsons Sun of March 27: "Nominees Named for Rotary Club Offices."

Besides the types of confusing headlines already named, there are two which bear discussion. One is confusing because not enough is told in the headline, and the other is confusing because the headline tells a very general story, leaving the reader to fit the facts to the particular case. The first is exceedingly indefinite and uses pronouns very often, naturally on account of their brevity. An example is a Lawrence Journal-World headline of March 28, "Phi Pois Win It," or that from the Topeka Capital, of March 29, "Hutchinson Takes It." The Salina Journal on April 14 had these two headlines: "Her Car Explodes," and "His Car Hits Culvert." Neither name was of importance to Salina readers, and so the headline sufficed. The type of headlines which might be called too general are such as this from the Topeka Capital of March 29: "Mennonites Suffer," referring to the fact that a number of them are marooned in Manchuria and are undergoing hardships. "Cattle Are Healthy" is an example from the same newspaper of March 27. In any event with the headline writer it is a matter of saying the most in the smallest space, yet making a selection of words which is "catchy," if possible, and using synonyms, or making omissions or additions wherever he is forced to do so. He has in mind the conservation of space above all, remembering that even the width of the letter "I" may cause the headline to be out of proportion.

It would probably be interesting to read a story composed in the idiom of the newspaper headline, for it would be a story containing very few long words, the expected words would be shortened or replaced, articles would be omitted altogether, verbs might be

omitted and so might occasional nouns, and prepositional phrases would probably dominate. Examples of the kind of thing to be expected may be found in cutlines.² One of these is taken from the Springfield Republican of April 13: "First Autogiro to visit city hovers over Court Square on Demonstration flights given yesterday in Springfield. This photograph taken by Republican staff photographer from one of the escort planes which met Capt. Dextor and escorted novel airplane to the city." Of course, the example is not written in true headline idiom. Two articles are used, and other parts of the story might be cut down or omitted. The matter of punctuating cutlines might be mentioned, and the use of capital letters certainly is to be questioned. In headlines of two or three lines' length there are possibilities of creating short stories in a very few words. An example is taken from the Hutchinson News of April 14: "Ohioan Runs Amuck, Stabs One, Burns Two, Ends Life." This kind of short story told in only two lines of print is not exactly frequent, but it is one of the devices used by the copy-reader to provide relief. Similarly, the Boston Transcript contains on April 18 "Wood Fires out, Roads Patrolled, Permits Stopped," thus telling the story briefly.

² Cutlines are the lines of type accompanying and explaining newspaper illustrations.

CHAPTER III

VOCABULARY AND SYNTAX IN NEWS STORIES

Speed characterizes the modern newspaper, for it presents its timely events to the public very quickly. And even though stories of genuine importance are sometimes treated at great length, the newspaper must use various and many kinds of stereotyped words and forms. Compression and substitution begin in the making of headlines for the news, and perhaps the headlines are largely the determining factors in a great many points of style for the rest of the newspaper. New uses are to be found almost every day in the headline; sooner or later those features may creep into the news itself. The new usage may be a new word, a new use for an old word, a substitution of one for another, a shortened word, a new arrangement, or some other type of expression which fits the case at hand and which may seem attractive to the headline writer or reporter handling the story. While he may be conserving a matter of a few picas¹ of space, however, the reporter is quite likely to use other type words which have gained newspaper usage as a matter of dress.² Such a word may be conflagration, once much used in place of fire. He may use imbroglio for game, in a sports story. If a preposition can do the work of a whole phrase or clause in a headline, it is quite likely that it will turn up in the same way in a news story.

1 A pica is a measurement of type width.

2 Dress is substitution of supposedly more colorful words for others.

Just as the copy-reader uses numerous short words in headlines to save space, the reporter uses them in his stories. These two do a great deal of borrowing back and forth. A distinctive newspaper usage may be found in connection with the words in, see, and with. Others of the type---short words which have numerous meanings, both implied and inherent---are to be found in somewhat narrowed limits. In all probability, these words first found their variety of meaning in the headlines, though they are now widely used in lead paragraphs. In may replace almost any phrase which contains that word. If a man is charged with murder, he will probably be "held in a murder case," according to the news story. "In connection with" is usually implied by the use of in. Sometimes the word implies make or do. An April 28 lead in the University Daily Kansan is: "The last papers to be served in the confiscation of the car owned by Joe Klaner, but driven by three other University students at the time of their arrest several weeks ago for possession and transportation of liquor, were served on Klaner yesterday." The use of see as a convenient newspaper word no doubt arises, too, from its frequent appearance in the headlines to indicate such meanings as those expressed by forecast, believe, predict, hope, and numerous others. Since there are frequent ideas expressed in news stories, see is indeed convenient. As a headline word, pointed out in Chapter II, it is extremely valuable, and its use is very frequent. In news stories it appears when a recognized authority gives his views on a subject; he may draw conclusions from established facts, make a prediction, or simply forecast coming events and their importance. With as an introductory word has already been discussed, and it is to be found

throughout news stories, principally as a means of avoiding additional clauses. Hold frequently appears as a means of dispensing with additional phrases and clauses in such a lead as this Associated Press story from Jefferson City, Missouri, dated April 27: "Attorney General Stratton Shartel, in official opinion today, held the legislature lacks constitutional authority to lay out congressional districts by resolution and without the governor's approval."

In many instances reporters shorten words for newspaper use. Principally those shortened forms appear first in the headlines, but they attain standard use in the news columns soon afterward. It is not surprising that slang enters the language through the newspapers, then, for certain types of slang are used regularly in newspaper headlines. Going a step farther, slang is used in leads and so reaches general newspaper usage. A noteworthy example is the use of dry to indicate a supporter of one side of the liquor question---with wet, of course, being given to the opposing side. Perhaps these words are not coinages of the news writer, but he took them for his own, principally because they were short and expressive. Their entrance into the news columns was only a question of time. Any controversy of long standing in the newspaper is likely to develop such names. Reds gained their sobriquet because of the red flag they waved. Tramway and omnibus long ago became tram and bus, probably not at the instigation of the headline writer, but no doubt with his full approval, and he quickly pounced upon them. An airplane is usually just a plane, and nearly always a person who is under the influence of strong liquor is a drunk.

It was easy and natural for the writer to shorten gasoline to gas; the automobile has long been an auto when the writer does not simply choose car, and a bicycle is a bike. Democrats may be called Demos, but G.O.P. is so short that Republican need not be cut in half. Russia may be shortened to Russ, and there are other possibilities in the names of such countries as Mexico and Japan.

Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage lists a number of curtailed words upon which copy-readers and reporters are likely to seize at opportune moments. Fowler's list italicizes the portions of the words retained: brigantine, chromolithograph, cinematograph, raccoon, coxswain, influenza, gymnasium, pant (s)aloons, telephone, photograph, preparation, or preparatory, quadrangle, radioactivity, rhinoceros, spec (s)acles, stylograph, substitute, supernumerary, veterinary or veteran, and zoological gardens. This dictionary is chiefly used in England, and some of the substitutions may be chiefly English in nature, but Americans use the same method of shortening. While the Englishman is cutting cinematograph to cinema, the American is cutting moving picture to movie. Similar substitutions and cuttings of words are to be found in abundance.

Certain newspaper words are doubtless overworked, partly on account of the fact that most stories fall under definite classifications. Only a very small percentage of news stories are of the kind which are wholly unexpected. Eight hours before a newspaper goes to press, it is fairly well established that a certain part of the front page will be devoted to stories which the newspaper knows will break,³ or stories on which there are certain to be new

3 Events break or happen.

developments by the hour of going to press. On all but the front page there is little doubt as to what material is to occupy the allotted space. Of course, an event may take place which will require three-quarters of the front page for coverage. This kind may be represented by that of the accident which took the life of Knute Rockne early in April of 1931 in a Central Kansas storm. Because types of stories, however, are pretty well classified and special writers are assigned to them before the events take place, some especially stereotyped words and phrases are certain to be utilized. Accounts of crimes, the stock market, politics, court procedure, public meetings addressed by speakers, and, of course, sports events are almost certain to produce more or less of a jargon. It is sports that lead in such a distinction, but the others have their share of phrases common to the type.

Short words predominate among those which are overworked. Headline influence again may be seen, but probably the effect is less than in other cases. It is very likely that news stories will speak of the pen or prison, rather than of the penitentiary, and probe replaces investigation consistently so as to take a leading place among the overworked words. Just as writers select short words in newspaper diction, however, there is a force at work which causes the reporter to try to brighten and vivify his work by variation. This opposing force is the law which requires the reporter to dress his language to some extent by the use of such substitutes as that of calling a fire a conflagration. There is a strong tendency to relegate such words as conflagration to the scrap heap, because they have been overworked. But the fact that a balance does exist should be consolation to both

reader and writer. It is in this way the reporter works his knowledge of synonyms, or supposed synonyms, to the fullest extent. He tries throughout to use the same words of importance as few times as necessary. He knows all of the synonyms for fire, including blaze and conflagration; he is able to speak of a meeting as a confab, conference, gathering, assembly, and otherwise disguise the bald fact that would be related were he to use meeting in every case. The realm of the sports pages presents more possibilities of this nature than any other department of the paper. A basket used in basketball has dozens of other names, any one of which is descriptive of the nature of the basket. The baseball writer is able to describe a two-base hit in many ways, and even with the prevalence of the homcrun, he is able to supply a different word every time he is called upon to name it in his story. Substitution of synonyms to avoid repetition is usually beneficial. The newspaper man by training probably is more skilful, considering the time allotted for composition, than the usual writer of English prose. Perhaps his word is a bit forced, but certainly it is interesting. The news writer may call a congressman a legislator, lawmaker, solon, representative, or may give him some equally descriptive name. The city commission may be designated as the "city dads," "town fathers," "city elders," or by other terms. The reporter who handles one type of story, such as court news, for instance, knows and has at his finger-tips all those classifying synonyms for the groups or bodies about which he does most of his writing.

Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage makes an excellent criticism of the practice of "elegant variation" in which the reporter so often indulges. Minor novelists and reporters, it points

out, are fascinated by a newly discovered ingenuity and proceed on the theory that the same word should not be used twice in a sentence---or within twenty lines or some other limit. There are careless repetitions, it is true, but there is no necessity to change merely to have a similar word or a synonym. Pronouns, says Fowler, too frequently are avoided to make way for elegant variation. Examples are numerous. Some of these variations are the use of "year's penultimate month" for November; cases for instances; the preacher or the genial essayist for Dr. Boyd; peril for enemy; nought for nothing, and habitat for home. This impulse toward elegant variation is also mentioned by Wilson Follett, in an article, "The Printed Word," from The Bookman of July, 1929:

"There seem to be two reasons why the reporter can hardly bring himself to write the simple pronouns, 'he', 'she', 'it', 'they', in contexts where their antecedents would be unmistakable and their use so natural as to appear wholly inescapable to a non-reporter. The first reason is that the reporter thinks he perceives in such contexts a chance to show off his ingenuity in reference or epithet. It is one of the curiosities of journalism that reporting of the news, so much of which is distinguished by verbal poverty and inane repetition, should light upon such a commonplace area in which to spread and preen itself. Hardly any accomplishment seems to give reporters the glow of self-admiration which they experience in calling the same thing by as many different names as they can think up. Fundamentally the impulse is a sheer barbaric love of ornament; the extra synonyms are the glass beads and earrings of the reporter's style...

"The unceasing torture of the language for variants and the resort to cart-before-horse pronouns are two of the most annoying defects of the newspaper man's writing. Both seem trifling enough. But consider. Both occur oftener in opening sentences than anywhere else; thousands skim these sentences to every score who read farther and to every individual who reads the editorials; many news items every day, including some fairly important ones from abroad, are cut each to one sentence and so printed. It follows that the newspaper reporter exerts through his opening sentences along an incalculable force upon the popular notion of how English ought to be written---a greater force, without doubt, than any other

printed medium except the headlines. The record of that influence is scattered through books and magazines. The rapid popular writer has, in fact, refined and standardized the newspaper device into one of the three or four stereotyped patterns for beginning his story or installment."

The writer fits the facts to formulas. He feels he knows exactly what points will be of interest to the reader, and it is those points which he covers. Consequently, the newspaper language, simple and concrete though it may be, usually easily understandable, is not written as our language is naturally spoken, though it has often been argued that newspaper language is that of the man in the street. The words are familiar, but their arrangement, because of newspaper usage, does not follow that of the ordinary conversationalist or that of the ordinary writer of prose. Whether that prose writer is writing in his best vein or the conversationalist reaches a high point of excitement, neither is able to delineate the outstanding facts of an event so concisely as the reporter, even though he may have been "on the job" only a short time.

Phrases seem to be better newspaper style than subordinate clauses. The writer of news avoids additional clauses and thus is able to escape some clumsiness. In addition to prepositional phrases of the with and in types, participles abound, quite often the past participle. A Lawrence dispatch in the March 28 Kansas City Star shows two: "The three University of Kansas students released on bond in the Douglas county district court, charged with possession and transportation of intoxicating liquor, will remain in school at present..." A special dispatch from Manhattan to the Topeka Capital on March 27 reads: "A concussion of the

brain, suffered from a stage fight that grew accidentally realistic, has put Fred Seaton, Manhattan, Kansas, State College radio announcer, sportswriter, and a leader in student affairs, in bed for more than a week." This lead also shows a good example of the type often used to include identification by a series of appositives. A March 15 dispatch to the Kansas City Times is: "The extra session of congress summoned by Senator George Norris of Nebraska and attended by Senator William E. Borah of Idaho and a score more Republican and Democratic leftwingers, did not enact any legislation." Following the policy of conserving space, the writer seldom makes use of that to introduce a dependent clause. However, the frequent omission of words or suitable phrases such as "the fact that," which the writer probably feels the reader will not miss in his translation of the news, may cause some confusion. An example is such a sentence as "I wish to emphasize you must make haste." The Topeka Capital on March 28 said: "Bert Ticehurst, assistant manager of the Spencer Petroleum Company, of Kansas City, was in Topeka yesterday to investigate charges made by George A. Reid, candidate for water commissioner, the city water department used a grade of fuel oil that was dangerous." This lead is compressed to almost as few words as possible, though when written naturally it might contain half a dozen more words.

One seldom finds grammatical errors in the better newspapers. Those mistakes which slip by the reporter are almost certain to be caught by the city editor, the linotype operator, or the proof reader. And all four of those persons know newspaper language well. Thus newspaper language is good grammatical English, and probably

it receives more corrections than a great many other kinds of writing. Were it not for the extreme hurry of the newspaper office, the percentage of grammatical errors would be virtually zero. If any violation of writing rules is found, it is probably the type in which the reporter feels he is entitled to indulge in his efforts toward introducing color or personality into the news.

Newspaper writing has generally the order of other English writing, but one must particularly notice that newspaper English placing of the adverb, of phrases and clauses, adverbial conjunctions, and adjectives used predicatively is what Fowler's Dictionary of Modern English Usage regards as a fetish. The reason for the position frequently assigned to adverbs is the desire to avoid the split infinitive and other split verb constructions. It is pointed out that there are eight possibilities in this unnatural placing of the adverb: the split infinitive, the fear of the split infinitive, imaginary split infinitive passive, splitting of the compound verb, separation of copulative verb and complement, separation of transitive verb and object, separation of preposition and gerund, and heedless misplacings. Fowler says that the infinitive should not be split if nothing is gained by doing so and if no difficulty is found in preventing the split. When the writer fears to split the infinitive in any case he is likely to be awkward. "To be should not be split," but "to be hurt" may be split. In splitting compound verbs the adverb most naturally follows the first auxiliary verb and the prejudice against the splitting of the compound verb is founded.

It is simply a delusion to avoid splitting the copulative verb and its complement. In many cases it is better that the transitive verb and its object not be split, but the reporter usually has the adverb precede the verb, whereas it should follow the object in those cases. However, placing the adverb too far from the verb should also be avoided. Avoidance of splitting preposition and gerund is mostly superstition. Heedless misplacings probably do not frequently occur in the reporter's diction. He is not likely to misplace his adverbs wilfully, although he should exercise care, and, as Fowler concludes, should disregard the superstitions and prejudices regarding split constructions.

The reporter may seek to avoid an excess number of phrases, and then he may seize upon another type of construction, the use of a number of loose compounds. A Parsons Sun headline of March 29 says: "Lump Sum Royalty Contract Upheld." It appears that an ingenious headline writer has boiled down the facts, yet here is the opening paragraph itself, an Associated Press dispatch from Topeka: "Attorneys prepared to argue points of law involved at the conclusion today of presentation of testimony in proceedings seeking to enjoin payment by the state schoolbook commission of \$135,000 on two lump sum textbook royalty contracts." Those last five words illustrate possibilities for extra phrases, but they are avoided by stringing along the nouns as modifiers of the last noun. A dispatch which the Associated Press sent from Pittsburg, Kansas, on April 10, speaks of the "Pi Delta Kappa state forensic tournament." A dispatch by a staff correspondent

to the Kansas City Star speaks of an "Oil states advisory committee" and later of the "United States federal conservation board." These examples show the influence of names of organizations, but here is a better example from the same correspondent on the same day: "The home rule liquor plank." A United Press dispatch of March 12 contains information regarding the "new five-power naval limitations agreement." Many other examples of the type are to be found wherever a compound name may be used as a modifier. The Topeka Capital of March 7 uses "Kansas State highway commission investigation proposal." A staff correspondent writes to the Kansas City Journal-Post on March 28 about the "St. Valentine's day gang massacre." "The Kansas University fraternity booze padlock protest case" is a mythical example, but there is a possibility it might be used, and there are similar examples to be found. Each avoids the presence of numerous phrases, and further cuts down the space required for the details of the story being presented. Aside from the brevity gained through employing such compounds, there is a certain uniqueness in their use. A new field is thus provided in which the ingenuity of the reporter may be exercised.

In recurring to words and their newspaper usage, we find they are used in as many ways as possible in the newspaper. Probably no type of writing makes more use of individual words than does news writing, where the search is continuous for a word which, though it may not be exactly the right choice, at any rate provides some relief from the monotony of a much-used term. Short ones are desired, and they are probably used most

often; yet those of great length easily find their way into the news columns if they provide something in the way of relief. The reporter is unafraid of cutting a word, provided he feels his reader will be able to understand just what is meant. Possibly the reporter is playing a game with the reader, extending his imagination bit by bit and gradually widening the field of word usage. Slang does not begin in the news columns, but if it becomes general it may be certain of harbor there.

The extent to which newspapers will use a short word which happens to fit one case but "imposes upon" another is interestingly shown by Miss Margaret Lynn of the University of Kansas English faculty writing in the November, 1930, issue of American Speech. Her subject is "Deltas and Deans." Miss Lynn says that one may be sure to find certain words used in the same old places in the same old ways, running like rivers between well defined banks. However, there is another type which spreads out into numerous deltas, and dean is one of these. The word has become a newspaper writer's superlative in almost every application. There are deans of history, literature and also hair dressing, and dry-point etching. Sometimes dean means simply the oldest, as "dean of the barkeepers." An Associated Press dispatch, Miss Lynn says, relates the story of a "dean of centenarians among women," who was 104 years old. There is a "dean of farmhouses" in New England. There are deans of saurians, deans of icebergs, and Adam or Methuselah must be "dean of men." Miss Lynn expects to hear her neighbor speak one of these days of the "dean of his

two children" and she is confident the new home for aged men will be called the "Deanery."

There is a type of dress which the news writer places upon his work that lifts it from the conversational or ordinary style of the talker, and yet this style is usually quite clear. Possibly one may say that the excessive speed of the twentieth century is exemplified in the language of the newspaper, the language which has been boiled down to the last possible point in the way of expressing a number of related facts. Whether or not there is agreement on this point, it is useless to debate the speed with which the reader can grasp what is being written. He might grasp the facts more readily if the writer had placed but one in a sentence instead of grouping all in one of several well defined kinds of sentences.

A defense of the news writer is given by the Detroit News, quoted by the Kansas City Times of April 7:

"It is quite the fashion for public speakers to take supposedly humorous flings at news reporters and to impress their audiences with the idea that speakers are compelled to exercise great patience with the press, and consider themselves lucky if what they say in public is not completely reversed or rebuilt into a meaningless crazy-patch statement by the presumably inferior being known as the newspaper reporter. By and large, newspaper reporters are probably as highly trained, capable, conscientious, painstaking---and generous---a lot as any profession can boast. No newspaper can afford to take chances with the reading public, which wants essential facts stated in a decent style, by assigning other than that kind of reporters to get the news. If public speakers were generally as well equipped and kind as are the reporters who refuse to make speakers ridiculous by quoting grammatical errors, slang, near-profanity, and ungenerous remarks, there would be a better brand of public speaking on the market."

CHAPTER IV

INDIVIDUALIZING AND HUMANIZING THE NEWSPAPER

Despite all its stereotyped forms resulting from work at high speed, the newspaper is still full of color and individuality, as a result of several definite tendencies in news writing of recent years. The impersonality of the newspaper, so long sought by that institution through its reporters and its contributing newspaper associations, has broken down in nearly all stories of any great length. Now there is a distinct tendency towards furnishing the readers with a "slant" of the story which is colored by the writing of an excellent reporter. The business of making the news story "opinionless" may be said to be passe, and few newspapers care to give the bare news in any but the shortest stories.

The staff correspondent of the newspaper attempts to color the news he furnishes with details which will be entirely satisfactory to the views of his particular paper. And, because the newspapers have begun to color their stories, the press associations have found it necessary, or at least desirable, to furnish something besides the entirely necessary points of news. Sports have always had their colorful language, which is just a little more racy than any other type employed by the other departments of the newspaper. Columnists of either local or national fame lend spice to the news story---for often they are given first-page prominence---and editors themselves no longer invariably confine their remarks to the editorial page. Newspapers now use numerous front page editorials.

The country has developed to the point of centralization and standardization of industries of all kinds. Newspapers have followed closely in the movement. So then, the Associated Press, the United Press, and a very few other press associations remain to furnish news for the host of newspapers. If the newspapers over the country depended entirely on one or more of these associations, they would be carrying the same foreign¹ news in hundreds of cities within a radius of several hundred miles. Suppose we review a mid-western United States situation for the moment. The Kansas City Star serves a large field in Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. If the field is limited still further to Kansas and Missouri, the illustration may be made even clearer. There are at least fifteen leading daily newspapers in Kansas which are members of the Associated Press, and nearly that number in Missouri. If each is to carry no more world news than that which the Associated Press furnishes, then the Star, which serves the same territory as the others, may be liable to a decrease in circulation. Very naturally, then, the Star will associate itself with an exclusive newspaper alliance, or it will place staff correspondents at almost all of the principal news sources. The purpose is two-fold. The correspondents may write a more pungent story for the Star than the Associated Press correspondents on the job, and also correspondents may do much to localize the force and importance of

1 Foreign news is any which originates outside the newspaper's own trade territory.

the story in Kansas City, if such a possibility exists.

The human interest story has received a decidedly new treatment in recent years, as contrasted with that of a decade ago, when the human interest story was considered front page material only as filler, or for general appearance and balance of the front page. It was recognizable by use of double column headlines, bold-face type, indentation, or some other device which set it apart from the ordinary news story. It comprised almost any material which appealed more to the senses and sentiment of reader and writer than to judgment and mind. But the type as one distinctly apart has virtually left the front page. Now it is handled like almost any other story and is accepted by the reader as genuine news. A particularly interesting lead from the Kansas City Times of April 11 reads: "Great flocks of canaries, murmuring thrushes and piping blackbirds--the air was full of them last night at Convention hall. The school children were singing and the spectators literally were hanging on the rafters. Seven thousand songbirds were there, and when the parents set out to find their own, some starting before the close of the program--well, that was a scene the board of education can appreciate, and what Miss Mabelle Glenn, the music director of the schools, is too experienced to let fluster her. For little did the seventh graders care that the parents of the sixth graders were stalking the aisles for their offspring while the seventh graders were singing. The seventh graders sang on, their lips busy and their eyes seeing

only the green goddess waving the musical wand." The news of the story might be packed into three or four paragraphs, but the human interest of the story might have been maintained for three or four columns, though only one was used. The story was about children, and though not one child's name was given, every school child in Kansas City really was mentioned and each was a hero to his parents. The story was colored, certainly, but it was a more valuable story for having been colored. And the writer's self showed plainly---contrary to what might have been demanded some years ago, when the editorial writer might have taken it upon himself to say the nice things about the children while the reporter merely summed up the facts in the few necessary paragraphs. News that the British government had made at least a temporary peace with India through Mahatma Ghandi was worthy of much first-page space, but much additional material was written for and printed on the front page which was purely of the human interest type. How Ghandi appeared almost as a specter at the time of the signing of the armistice is given a great deal of space. The Associated Press devoted thousands of words to descriptions of the man, and only a few paragraphs to the real news of the event. An egg truck was stolen in Kansas City, an incident whose news value probably amounted to a short paragraph. The eager reporter seized upon the company's slogan, however, to produce this news story in the Kansas City Star on April 5:

"One of Frank Cromwell's 'We Know Our Eggs' trucks stopped beside the Kansas City Athletic Club at 9 o'clock today while Lou Tankersley, the driver,

went inside to make a delivery.

"When he returned the truck was gone. With it went a whole truckload of eggs and butter valued at \$250. The truck itself is valued at \$2,000.

"'With our name all over the outside,' the former mayor said, 'I didn't suppose there was a chance that anyone would steal a truck. It ought to be easy to identify. If the police radio was working now the thief wouldn't get far.'

"'Would you know your eggs if they were found,' he was asked.

"'We always know our eggs,' he said."

Nearly 300 words are devoted in an Associated Press dispatch of May 5 to the story of how a puppy stole a fried egg off the President's plate while he played with his grandchildren. The story is worth printing because of that particular feature called human interest. The reader of the dispatch was given no identification of the story until its lead paragraph had been read. Almost all newspapers have discontinued the practice of absolutely identifying human interest stories.

While newspapers have been humanizing their news stories by expanding through employment of writers with individual tastes, the news associations have not been idle, nor have they been slow in following the footsteps of the newspapers, particularly the larger ones. Coloring of political stories has not yet been seen in stories by most press association writers--for their material is sent to newspapers of all political alliances--but these writers have humanized the news, and when they do this, they are as skillful in many instances as the staff correspondent. The writer, even for the press association, is now given a voice in

the story. He is no longer merely the machine by which the facts are gathered. He has become a person telling the story as interestingly as possible. He continues to tell it briefly; but if he sees a humanized side of the facts, if he can make a timely observation on what he has collected, or if he can make it more interesting by means of an interpretation, he will probably have a better product than otherwise. And he is seeking to make his story as interesting as possible---not as near the bare truth as possible. Recent use of by-lines has served to make the work of the news association correspondents a great deal more interesting for them and their readers. The United Press and International News were first to see the value of giving the writers a chance to assume responsibilities by means of the by-line. The Associated Press followed a few years ago, and nearly all important wire² stories are signed by the writer now. The knowledge that he is reading the observations of a skilled writer who is also taking responsibility for what is said gives the reader more assurance that he is reading material of value and that he is not reading merely the recordings of an automaton who has no powers of observation and no opinion on the matter being treated.

The press associations are no longer virtually alone in the coverage of news of world importance. In order to maintain prestige, however, the press associations are forced to give better

² Wire stories are those obtained by telegraph and telephone facilities.

coverage of these events. Each large newspaper is represented on the field of important action, and the press associations are making a fight to give just as good coverage as the large newspapers. This situation results in more men being assigned to cover the event in question, and the more men on the job the more varied the interpretations presented to the reading public. Both newspapers and press associations are anything but frugal in the amount of toil or money assigned to cover a big break such as Lindbergh's crossing of the Atlantic ocean by air, or an airplane crash such as that in which Knute Rockne met his death. There are no longer just a few writers covering an event of world-wide importance. Therefore, a mere recitation of the facts in an unbiased fashion is not enough. Each writer adds as may individual sidelights as possible, gives his best interpretation of what he sees, and hopes to make his story more interesting than those of rival workers.

Despite the fact that speed is a general watchword, then, there is a spirit of willingness to listen to any interesting story the newspaper may have to tell. Perhaps, even with its speed, the world does have more time to play now than formerly. Throughout the history of the newspaper the sports pages have been the source of the most figurative newspaper language. The sports writer always seems to have been playing a game with the reader. Any new way to convey an old idea has been hailed with perfect satisfaction by the reader of the baseball and football news. He has greeted eagerly and joyfully the slang of the sports

writer, and he who has not followed the sports pages closely has real difficulty in deciphering just what the writer is talking about. Perhaps the sports writer has shown the news writer a new opening in putting color into news stories. Saying the same thing in as many different ways as possible is a device which any writer may use, though he should exercise extreme caution and should proceed no farther than necessary to cover his subject. And while the reporter probably never will attain the free rein accorded the sports writer, he can at any rate make use of some of the latter's devices which are not too bizarre for the purpose. The sports writer may use extravagant synonyms and descriptive phrases which are not permitted on the part of the reporter, but there are bounds, too, which limit the sports writer's sphere. Gradually he is using better English, though he retains all the color for which he is famous. By means of his tone of great familiarity, the sports writer probably will retain his colorful style, for he may be more informal than any other writer on the newspaper staff. It is toward something of this informality, however, that the news writer is striding and he is making more and more use of the device to interest and hold his readers. The fact that the sports page is so widely read may be in part responsible for the realization by the reporter that there is no specific demand that the news story contain just the bare facts. If only these were used the baseball story might dwindle to the mere score by innings. However, if such events as baseball games played half way across the continent may cause the reader to examine a minute description

of the play and devour the box score in addition, the news writer is right in deducing the fact that the reader will take the time, no matter how busy he is, to read an interesting political yarn or any other kind of a colored or individualized story. Perhaps after all, the reporter has come to realize, the reader likes his stories sugar-coated, or at any rate decorated, so that they will be more interesting. The reader may not care for a novel, yet he prefers to read the news in the form of an interesting story rather than in no guise at all, after the fashion of the stock report or the weather chart.

Wherever it heightens the interest of the story, reporters may seize upon an interesting figure of speech as a suitable lead. Usually the reporter lacks the time to maintain the figure throughout his story and often such a feat would be impossible. An interesting lead is taken from the Kansas City Journal-Post of March 11: "L. F. Loree, chairman of the executive committee of the Kansas City Southern and physician to other roads, believes his patients are suffering not only from economic depression, but also from bus lines, truck lines, and pipe lines. One is enough to put the patient to bed, and all are aggravating the case, Mr. Loree believes." Numerous figures are to be found in stories of the seasons, such as "Old Man March hovered just around the corner today, and there was frost in his whiskers." There are King Winter and Princess Autumn. Dame Rumor may be quoted when the story is purely the concoction of the reporter. Courts of law may be likened to games of chess. Writers may apply the figures of

racing to many widely varying types of stories. Sometimes mixtures result, as in this lead from the March 27 Parsons Sun: "The city primary campaign was drawing to a close today with action on five fronts in the mayoralty campaign, and an even thirteen candidates putting the finishing touches to aspirations for the job of city commissioner. Two of these commissioner candidates---Joo Walker, incumbent, and Ed Gould---seek the finance job, while another eleven want to be commissioner of streets. The campaign has sailed along on an even keel the past few weeks and will close one of the quietest that Parsons has had for a number of years." First it is a battle, and then it is a cruise---this election campaign.

Helping to color the news and make it more palatable to various individuals rather than to the readers as a class are the column writers, either of local or national fame. These writers may treat news in a jocular vein, and they may in some cases become vitriolic or extremely humorous in their treatment---but, in any event, they help the reader to evaluate and weigh the news as it is published. And it is doubtful whether the reader resents this assistance in assimilating the news. The local correspondent may be such a type as the writer of "About Town" in the Kansas City Star. The column conducted by that writer, as in the case of many such columns, features the presentation of matters which ordinarily would not find their way into the news columns because they lack the qualities which make news. However, these stories are of human interest to the reader

who perhaps examines them more readily than the news stories themselves. Other types of stories in the column include opinions voiced by the writer. Not all of them are entirely judicial, perhaps, but the writer does give one man's ideas on many subjects of general nature, though perhaps not up-to-the-minute in point of time, a very important item of consideration in news stories of most kinds. Whether the writer uses news stories and expands to great degrees or uses scraps of gossip which are just as pleasing to the reader as bits of ordinarily highly important news, he is being a living person in his stories. That feeling of kinship between reader and writer has considerably enhanced the value of the newspaper. The local column writer may view everything of importance to every reader of his newspaper. If he is humble enough, he will view all of those situations as fairly and also as interestingly as possible.

As for the columnist of national importance, whose writings appear in newspapers in all corners and points of the country, his sphere is perhaps greater than the local writer's, of course, yet he can scarcely hope to reach so closely to the individual reader. Ability to follow the events of the day and put a touch into the facts which will make them seem to be of far greater interest than otherwise is a characteristic of the columnist who attains national fame and reaches the point of having his observations syndicated. Writers such as Will Rogers depend upon their humorous manner of viewing the news of the day to find favor in the eyes of the reader. Yet, Rogers writes many an article in

which there is no humor at all. He, as well as other writers of the type, counts upon the reader's devouring the news of the day and keeping up with the times. Then, a casual observation by the columnist opens a new vista for the reader or shows him a side oftentimes quite unexpected. Another type of columnist is O. O. McIntyre, whose observations contain little or no news. But he does make New York City seem a great deal more human to the average reader. He is able to render the commonplace as something of importance, too. Usually he shows the commonplace side of a community ordinarily regarded as highly sophisticated and thoroughly businesslike. Ability to look behind the scenes adds color to the news of the day, and it is to the columnist that the reader turns for these intimate glimpses. They add interest to dry facts. The world still worships heroes, and probably no group of people contains so many heroes and heroines as the motion picture colony. Mollie Merrick---and of course many others---may write a column whose news value can be boiled down to two short paragraphs. Yet her stories are thoroughly interesting, and the amount of fiction, color, or whatnot she may add to the bare facts serves to heighten the interest of the material and increase its value to both reader and newspaper.

Some of the most interesting of colored stories furnished for the newspaper are probably written because of the intense interest manifested by the public in certain characters either notorious or famous. "Scarface Al" Capone, Chicago gang leader, probably receives as much publicity for what he does or does not

as Dr. Albert Einstein receives for his great scientific work. The public distinguishes but little what the work may be, and either man is good newspaper copy. Once a man gains fame, his name is likely to command newspaper space whenever there is the slightest excuse or opportunity for printing it. Whether George Herman "Babe" Ruth hits a home-run or breaks a leg, he is certain to receive front page publicity regularly. As long as William "Big Bill" Thompson was mayor of Chicago, he commanded national recognition almost daily in the newspaper. "Texas" Guinan of night club fame probably finds space in many newspapers, whether or not the event in connection is of any importance at all. Of course, these figures pass out from under the limelight. But the reading public likes personality in the news. That personality may be furnished by anyone whose name is familiar to all. "Rudy" Vallee may be or may not be a musician, but it is news when he is "egged" in Boston or when a Detroit audience hurls grapefruit at him.

Newspaper writers are said to have a "nose for news," which really amounts to a combination of penetrating curiosity and clear judgment. This element of curiosity often leads the reporter to events which are curious, of course. Anything strange, extraordinary or peculiar attracts his attention. He need not overwork his news sense in such cases, but he finds space for his stories about strange subjects and objects. A fad or craze which happens to attract the attention of the public will, quite naturally, be covered by the newspaper. Endurance contests of

almost innumerable types were promoted a few years ago. They were usually termed marathons because of the idea of endurance connected with them. Dancing, flag-pole sitting, flying, tree-sitting, chair rocking, and numerous other events crowded the list, and newspapers followed the activities closely.

Strange diseases often have attracted wide attention because of the space devoted to them in news columns. Sleeping sickness cases have been avidly followed by readers in widely scattered sections. It seems that the discovery of one such case is likely to be the signal for the uncovering of others over the country. In addition to sleeping sickness, there have been records of cases of hiccupping for long periods. Any rare disease may gain for its owner newspaper space half way across the continent.

Then there are the fads and foibles of the general public, which get their start perhaps slowly but spread rapidly to many sections of the country. A controversy of nationwide scope was created during the winter of 1931 on the subject generally termed "corn pone dunking." Partly in a spirit of playfulness, the newspapers joined one side or another in the controversy to present arguments either for crumbling or for dunking "corn pone." The Atlanta (Georgia) Constitution even went so far as to appoint a "Corn-pone dunking editor." Various controversies of the kind have raged for a time. One noted debatable subject is that of the "split infinitive." Editors have spent much time and space in editorial columns on the subject, and it has also found admission to the front page.

Scarcely any newspaper in Kansas or Missouri is without a section devoted to a "give and take" battle with the other editors of the two states. That this sort of thing exists elsewhere is not to be doubted, but it certainly is an important part of Kansas-Missouri journalism. An opinion on any subject under the sun may be voiced by an editor of one of forty newspapers in the two states. If anything can possibly be found wrong with it, or it may be laughed at in any way, the editor in question quite likely will be "ridden on a rail," figuratively, by his brother editors. And it is really a brotherly feeling they have. The matter treated by the editors on the whole is of a trivial nature. And if it is not trivial, it is at least treated in a light-hearted vein. However, this is no assurance that the material is not worth reading. The field is opened in such bantering between the editors for humanizing the editorial page, as well as the news. More humor finds its way into the columns of the editorial page, and an editor cannot take himself too seriously without being made the butt of many jokes perpetrated by fellow editors. Sportsmanship between them, as between players on rival athletic teams, has advanced far and beneficially.

CHAPTER V

NEWSPAPER LICENSE

Opinions probably differ widely as to how far a newspaper may go in its desire to present a more readable story to its patrons. Of course, the policy of the individual newspaper is to be considered, for a yellow sheet¹ in a large city may go much farther than a good newspaper. Newspapers concern themselves a great deal with outlining future happenings and events, they often present news stories under the guise of conjectures which are unproved, and they present certain other types not for news value but for matter of relative interest.

Forecasts and predictions of what is expected to happen tomorrow often take up a great amount of space in a newspaper. As a matter of fact, a large portion of the news is written, just as the events occur, by reporters assigned in advance to cover the news. Only a small share of the front page embraces stories which come as complete surprises to the managing editor and his staff. The public is prepared for all the coming events of importance through the columns of the newspapers and it is the latter's privilege to say a great many fictitious things in its forecasts and predictions. The news of tomorrow may be cleverly written by a reporter who is in touch with those in charge of coming events. A great many of these events have

¹ A yellow sheet is a sensational newspaper.

handlers with whom the newspapers are in league, in order to interest the reader, draw his attention to the events, and cause him to direct his support in the desired manner. A great many "bigger and better" claims are made as the newspaper outlines what may be of interest in the happenings of tomorrow or the next few days. Increasing the expectations of the reader in the events about to take place is a common trick of the newspaper, which may or may not have the best interests of the reader at heart and in mind as it presents the story.

Stories of approaching elections give the newspaper especially good opportunities to present forecasts and predictions. Realizing that there exists no basic groundwork of facts in connection with certain events, the newspaper writer may present a highly colored story; for instance, in issues of the Kansas City Journal-Post and Kansas City Star on the Sunday preceding the 1930 primary election in Kansas, each gave much space to the election scheduled to be held two days later. The Star, supporting Clyde M. Reed, found that all indications pointed to a victory for the governor then in office. The Journal-Post found that Frank Haucke would be nominated, but its reasons were no more conclusive than those presented by the Star. That time the Journal-Post was right. However, the situation was exactly reversed in the November general election, when the Journal-Post again found that Haucke would be victorious, while the Star believed it would be an exceedingly close race and a probable victory for Harry H. Woodring, the Democratic nominee. Politics and little else swayed the opinions

of the newspapers in question, and knowledge of the general love of the American public for "riding the bandwagon" was responsible for the extravagant claims each made.

In point of concealing authority by means of shifting that authority to anonymity or obscurity, the political stories probably rank first. They are full of color, but they probably are of just as much interest for the clever methods of concealing authority or extending newspaper license as for the individuality they may express. As has been stated, the political story may be a prediction based on anything but facts, or based on facts which have been twisted to please the desires of the faction controlling the newspaper in question. But there are other ways in which a political story may have influence. It is easily possible for the writer to present only one side of a question. He may stick closely to the truth and say nothing but the truth. Yet he may use half-truths throughout his story. The result will be, perhaps, a particularly good political story which does justice to his side, but certainly not to the opposition. That this is good politics, however, seems to be unquestioned. And as long as license is extended to the newspapers in such cases, they are likely to continue to use it. Particularly clever instances of aiding a political fight are those which deal with the struggles within an opposing party. The Kansas City Star's Washington correspondent on April 5 wrote: "An appeal to each member of the Democratic national committee that he forward to Washington his individual recommendations for the 1932 platform---particularly

on prohibition---went forward today from John J. Raskob, chairman. In letters made public today, the chairman repeated the 'home rule plan' recommendation he advanced before the recent meeting of the committee here, which stirred the ire of southern Democrats, led by the party's senate leader, Joseph T. Robinson." As long as Republicans are able to keep the Democrats split wide open on even one question, the chances for Republican victory remain good. Hence, stories of struggles within the Democratic party make particularly good reading in newspapers which are avowedly Republican in sentiment.

Much of the material handled by staff correspondents is political. This fact enhances the opportunities of the correspondents for coloring the news. Public opinion is a great deal more easily swayed nowadays in the news columns than in the editorial pages, for politics is now handled as news material to a far greater degree than a decade or two ago. Under the guise of news, national political propaganda may be foisted upon the reading public, and no doubt it is much more interestingly handled by the reporter with a flair for fiction than by the editorial writer who uses almost pure argumentative style. The reader may be fully aware of the fact that he is reading political propaganda when he turns to the editorial page--- but he may be "swindled" when he reads the news columns, even though he may be aware of the fact that the correspondent is an ally or an employee of the newspaper for which he is writing politics in the form of news. The Kansas City Star's Roving Correspondent

sent a story to his newspaper on February 25 from Washington on the subject of the next presidential election in which he related that it is a generally conceded fact that President Hoover's political fortunes are at a very low ebb, but one could get an even money bet that Hoover would be re-elected in 1932. Then he said that Hoover and his party cannot do anything to improve the situation, but must sit quietly by and see what happens in the next congressional session, and that in that congressional session the Democrats will have far the better chance to "brow beat medicine" for the opposing party. The gist of the story was that Hoover would be re-elected despite all the efforts of the Democrats, but not one reason was given. It was implied that his strength was too great for the Democrats to overcome. The managing editor, one may guess, simply asks for political copy. It is furnished by the staff correspondent who doesn't have to have news. He needs but a few words from a politician---or perhaps he himself is one---and he can concoct any kind of an interesting yarn which proves little or nothing about the situation. Further, the reading public avidly selects it for reading.

The Kansas City Star has long been an enemy of the old guard or stand pat Republicans in Kansas. It is not surprising that every opportunity is seized by the Star, then, to criticize that wing of the party or throw a "monkey wrench" into plans of that group for control of the state organization. Such a story is a dispatch from Topeka, Kansas, on April 4: "The important political news in Kansas just now is the failure of the old guard

Republicans to produce any leadership that would direct the party out of the factional mire into which it has fallen. Following the election, the old guard spokesmen urged support for their candidates for the organization of the house and senate because they would restore the party to the old fighting organization." The story is not news in the strict sense of the word. It has not the timely quality required of real news. But it is political "dope" for the reader who believes as does the Star. Further, it serves to keep alive the fight which the Star is waging against the opposing side of the political party of which it is a member. The article occupies prominent front-page position and is there not at all for its news but for its political value.

The reporter often clouds or colors national and state political issues. He is free to twist the facts to any degree which appears at all logical in order to present the view which his newspaper desires presented. An interesting dispatch is this to the Star from Washington on April 10: "The sparring going on in both the Democratic and Republican parties for supposed advantage of position on prohibition just now is the most marked political activity of the season. Outside of Chairman Rascob's efforts it is not particularly obtrusive to public notice, because the jockeying is not between Democrats and Republicans, but among Democrats and among Republicans. It's a hearthside row in both parties. Broadly, the development of prohibition as a political question has been marked by a dry retreat before a wet advance. Outside what may be called

the professional drys like the Anti-Saloon League, there is little serious contention that prohibition enforcement is a success or even promises to be a success in the near future; and in neither party is the question, politically considered, one of whether prohibition per se is a good thing, but what can be done to put the issue at rest in the public mind, while getting the most out of it for themselves." The story clearly represents what the correspondent or perhaps even several politicians think. To say that it is news, however, is going considerably beyond the usual definition. This is a propaganda story, or at the very least is news highly colored. An observer might easily guess that the Republicans hope to make the issue on prohibition clear cut in 1932, still believing, of course, that they will remain dry while the Democrats take the wet stand. They further believe that the drys will win once more. If prohibition is not an issue, the Republicans see a likelihood of failure in the election.

In a somewhat different way the local political situation may be handled so as to present only one side of the questions at hand, even though the newspaper may consider its method really a fair one. In the event the newspaper is "at outs" with the city administration, for example, the news may be colored considerably. A concrete example is taken from the April 11 Kansas City Times: "Under 'more favorable conditions,' Matthew S. Murray, director of public works, this week opened bids on the fourth section of the Robert Gillham road sewer.

Sure enough, the king pin contractor of the Democratic machine's alleged combine, William Boyle, came in low this time. Last January conditions were not so favorable for Mr. Boyle. That was the first time Mr. Murray called for bids on the sewer, and Mr. Boyle was second in the bidding. The Torson Construction Company was low. But the Torson company did not get the bid. Mr. Murray gave many excuses why the contract was not awarded to Torson, who just previously had announced he was not a member of the contractors' combine." It is not a question of how much truth the Times is telling. The news contained in the article would ordinarily be given only as much space as absolutely required. If the Times recognized political handling of the award of contracts, it might have used the editorial page to say so, as it would undoubtedly have done some years ago. Now the reading public gets the story and the paper's comment together on the front page. Thus the newspaper, perhaps rightly, is given final power of judgment in the matter.

Newspapers very often make campaigns against what they term public enemies, and once the fight is started the fearless newspaper is quite likely to carry the fight to the last ditch in order to prove that it is right. Nearly all large newspapers have had such campaigns, and in many cases the work done has been very commendable. But are there not cases in which the newspaper steps beyond the bounds of propriety and in which it uses its influence indiscriminately? Almost instantly for readers of middle western newspapers, there

comes to mind the fight made by the Kansas City Star against Dr. J. R. Brinkley of Milford, Kansas, in 1930. Criticism of the methods used by the Star can scarcely be made at this time, as the case is still not settled, and possibly may never reach a satisfactory conclusion. The Star tried the case in the newspaper, rather than in the courts. Although the doctor may have been guilty of every crime ascribed to him, exceedingly poor taste was shown by that newspaper in condemning him. The Star was forced to extend itself to the limit to prove every point. Apparently the Star was well satisfied with itself in its fight, yet aside from sworn statements appearing in the newspaper, nothing had been proved in civil court against Brinkley by either the Star or the Kansas State Medical Association up to nine months after the accusations were hurled by the Star at the Milford doctor. The medical board did revoke his license, but it is extremely doubtful that the case would have been pushed had the Star not fought ceaselessly until the medical board acted. The point to be made is that the Star might have been much more dignified in its treatment of the case. A few columns would have handled the case impartially---the best way to handle such a matter before it reaches the courts. But the Star devoted several columns a day during the months of July, August, September, and October to discussing outrages allegedly perpetrated by the doctor and his staff of assistants. It appeared to many observers that the Star was merely making a play for additional supporters by waging its fight against a common enemy. Probably

nothing would have been too strong for the editorial columns, but news space was too often filled with sordid details of Brinkley operations and their results.

Less than a year later---early in 1931---the Star began a war on the Doherty public service interests which supply many middle western cities and communities with gas, oil, gasoline, and similar public utility services. From day to day were chronicled the stories of dealings of the Doherty company with various cities. A good example, and a fair one, is that sent by a member of the Star's staff from Webb City, Mo., on April 10: "Excessive domestic gas rates have put this once loyal and obedient Doherty-ized community in a bitter mood. The people here had felt a sentimental loyalty for the Doherty organization because Webb City was the home of W. Alton Jones, now the first vice-president of the Cities Service Company and Doherty's right-hand man in the management of the big and powerful utility group." The story further details how Webb City has turned on the Doherty company, along with other middle western cities, in the fight to force a reduction of rates. On the same subject is a correspondent's story of March 23 from Topeka: "Probing the profit-fattened ribs of the gas octopus dominated by Henry L. Doherty, investigators for the Kansas Public Service Commission have uncovered some grandstand plays that will be made before the Missouri Public Service Commission at Kansas City on April 15." At that time, nothing had been proved in court against the Doherty company, yet the Star chose to try the case in the newspaper before it

might reach the court. The Star was making an appeal to the ordinary reader, the man who is not a corporation employee, and one who is easily influenced by those who promise relief from the burdens imposed by the corporations---if such burdens really are imposed. Exposure of the Doherty methods made good front page copy for the Star, and every effort was made to uncover new material on the situation in any city which used Doherty utility service. Into these stories of exposures made by the newspaper go all the efforts of the trained reporters who are writing from the newspaper's point of view and with the knowledge that evidence of all statements may be furnished in a general way, such evidence being almost any kind of twisted statement or the word of an interested person whether he is of the majority group or not.

But, just as the newspaper may have its pet aversions and battles---in which it may help in a general fight for such things as the removal of all bill-boards within five miles of the city, or for a general reduction in street car fares---the newspaper may also have its hobbies. These, too, may be ridden until their usefulness vanishes. If the newspaper is judicious in its choice of hobbies, it may serve a great civic need. If not, then it is very likely to run afoul of public disapproval to such an extent that its reputation will be definitely hurt. The matter of hobbies is less dangerous, by far, however, than that of battles, though the newspaper may reach a wearisome point in its desire to support a civic project. A newspaper may be intensely interested in the outcome of an election or some civic improvement.

Either as a supporter or as an opponent of the project, the newspaper may produce many columns of material on the subject, much of which is irrelevant and a great deal more of it uninteresting---all of it being regarded as worthy of front page position. Perhaps the newspaper has promised certain administration or civic heads that it will support a movement for a new city park or an amusement center. The newspaper may spend much time and money in comparing the city with others in which citizens enjoy such parks or amusement centers. All of the advantages will be pointed out by the newspaper, and it may quote many persons who are in sympathy with the project, but probably none who are against it. The newspaper would be very likely to print many pictures on the front page, showing similar parks or amusement centers. It probably will paint in glowing terms what the project will mean to the city. Very little of the material will be harmful in most instances. The point is that the newspaper is devoting valuable news space for what it terms a civic enterprise of great value and worthy of all the attention the newspaper can give it. Perhaps the greatest call made upon the newspapers in support of a city-wide project is that made when the city is trying to raise funds for charity. Whether the drive is a unified and concerted one or is conducted as separate campaigns by each charity organization, the newspaper is almost certain to devote many front page columns to the drives. It is almost unheard of for the newspaper to refuse to give space to such events. Perhaps it is all an enlargement of the definition of news, but probably the new uses

to which the front page is put is a widening of the scope of the newspaper.

As has been noted, newspapers frequently conduct trials before the cases actually reach court. Newspaper policy often dictates that it shall support the prosecution in all criminal cases. Sometimes this attitude works hardships on the accused and sometimes even works hardships on the prosecution. Whether the newspaper has such rights to "try" cases or not is debatable. Apparently the newspaper is licensed to say a great many things which remain unproved. Of course, if everything the newspaper printed needed a certified statement as backing, all newspapers would be smaller. An effort is made, however, to display authority for all important statements it makes. News coming from regular sources, such as the President, some official of high ranking, or an organized group through an accredited spokesman, is never questioned by the reader, as long as the reporter recounts the fact that such and such a bit of news was furnished by this reliable source. The reader needs only to know that what he reads is sanctioned by some regular authority.

In citing his authority, however, the reporter may "over act" his part. For instance, he may be reasonably sure that something he hears is entirely truthful, but there may be any number of reasons why he is unable to verify the news certainly and finally. Undaunted, however, he may exhaust every resource before he gives up in his attempt to get official sanction of the treasure he has uncovered. Failing in this, then, the reporter may shift his

authority to the mythical or pretended interview, in which he shows that his news is of value by covering the source from which it emanates. There are almost innumerable ways by which the writer may cover up his authority, although he needs but one or two as a matter of convenience. Furthermore, he may be merely inventing the whole yarn. In that case, he is probably extending his newspaper license too far, yet the reader should be able to realize when the bounds have been overstepped, and the cautious reader will probably not be fooled. A United Press dispatch from London on March 12 says: "A committee representing the United States, Britain, Japan, France and Italy will be formed to draft a new five-power naval limitations agreement, incorporating the new Franco-Italian accord, it was understood today in reliable American quarters." Undoubtedly the reporter is in receipt of valuable information which is true. Failure to give the exact source may be based on one of several reasons. The authority may not wish to be quoted, the news may have leaked out through an assistant secretary whose "higher-up" will not permit an interview, the agreement is not reached, or other factors may prevent its official announcement. It may be true, just the same, however, and the enterprising reporter realizes he has just as much of a story without the authority as he could possibly have with it. The second paragraph of a staff correspondent's story to the Kansas City Star from Jefferson City, Missouri, on April 5 says, "It was said tonight the governor will refuse to be caught in the trap the Democrats are setting through the strategy of passing the responsibility to him for failure of

redistricting. Those close to the chief executive say he is willing to accept anything like a fair plan, even a 7 to 6 division with the Democrats on the long end, but considers the pending proposal not only extremely partisan, but unfair to the state." It is not to be inferred from the story that the writer has talked to the governor, or even one of his close followers, but the Star supports the governor of Missouri and is showing him in a favorable light in this story, which probably leaked to the reporter from sources really close to the governor. Perhaps the governor himself said the things ascribed in general to him. At any rate the governor might not want it directly understood by the Democrats that he said what appears in the Star. He can "get away with it," as long as the reporter does not quote him directly. A United Press dispatch on February 28, from Topeka, said: "Many measures before the Kansas legislature will not receive consideration during the present session, it became apparent today." No authority for the statement seems to be needed, though undoubtedly the reporter had talked with important officials who did not care to be quoted on the subject. It did become apparent, but not until the reporter had been told or had been able to see through long experience what was likely to happen. Quite often the reporter's own ingenuity or shrewd observing powers stand him in good stead in cases of this kind. He is able to determine and predict events. He makes his prediction and hides the authority.

Besides its movie stars and idols of the sports world, the newspaper reading fraternity probably gets the greatest enjoyment

out of reading about criminal court procedure, and the newspaper has been quick to realize the fact. Many a criminal has become virtually a hero in the eyes of the reading public, whether his feats be heroic and noble or merely base and tawdry. In crime stories, particularly of habitual criminals, the newspaper has taken extreme license and right-of-way. Almost anything concerning the life of the criminal may occupy front page prominence without shocking more than a small percentage of the newspaper's readers. There probably have been numerous crimes committed because their authors desired front page publicity and the fame or infamy which accompanies such practices. Almost eagerly have numerous criminals aided in the presentation of their life stories for the newspaper readers. Success in a financial way has marked many of these episodes. Perhaps this type of writing is a feature of yellow journalism, but highly respectable newspapers used column after column daily for periods of several months on the subject of that maniac Hickman, the murderer caught in Los Angeles and later executed because he killed a small girl after mutilating her body. Cases of libel against newspapers may not be said to be extremely rare, yet they are not quite common either. A great many so-called public enemies such as Al Capone, Chicago gang leader; Jack (Legs) Diamond, New York racketeer; and Arnold Rothstein, New York gambler, profit by newspaper publicity. "Big Bill" Thompson is not on the list of those convicted of crimes, though he is thought to have been instrumental in permitting many

of the escapades attributed to Capone. At any rate, those are newspaper charges hurled at him, and though he filed big libel suits against both the Chicago Tribune and the News, he never attempted to carry the cases to court. He and the others named find no cause for worry in the epithets and charges thrown by newspapers. They no doubt find great satisfaction in this notoriety, which probably is an aid to them in their unlawful practices. The newspapers feel their security in saying almost anything they please concerning such men, and are partly, if not wholly, responsible for making their lives seem quite romantic to the average newspaper reader.

And so, the newspaper writer has left to his own judgment the problem as to how he may handle the situation. Although he ordinarily is handling no particularly new assignment, he may uncover one at the most unexpected moments. Then his judgment comes into play. He chooses his own method of presenting the story to the reader. He has license to proceed in one of many different ways. The story is left to his judgment, and the writer who makes the greatest use of his opportunities is the reporter who rises in the estimation of editor and reader alike. The newspaper is a great educator. Its field is well described in the Detroit News, as quoted by the Kansas City Star on April 6:

"Few people think of education apart from the schools, and there is a tendency to consider education at an end when school-books are laid aside. But G. E. Marchand, business counselor of New York, recently expressed a bit of wisdom that challenges thought.

"'A few pennies spent every day for newspapers,' he

said, 'is the tuition in the greatest school in the world.'

"The modern newspaper is a unique institution. Primarily it engages to satisfy natural human curiosity. In ancient times, one who had journeyed beyond the limits of his little community was surrounded upon his return by a throng eager to hear the news. Herodotus and others whose names have come down to us as historians and authorities upon ancient lore gained their repute by satisfying the curiosity of their fellow citizens.

"The modern newspaper has elaborated the system beyond all that the wildest dreams of the ancients could conceive. The reports of its paid travelers flash momentarily across continents and oceans. It has emissaries in remotest corners of the earth; they have peculiar access to everything that transpires. They have genius for inquiry, skill in narration; and every facility for transmitting what they have to tell.

"But the university of the newspaper engages to do more than tell the happenings of the moment. It undertakes to analyze, interpret, and make practical application of world experience to the needs of its constituency. It discusses tendencies, warns of perils, exhorts to good conduct, advises in matters of health, economy, civic responsibility, interests of the home, child welfare and many other matters vitally affecting its readers. So wide, able and authoritative instruction scarcely is to be found elsewhere. And, as Mr. Marchand points out, its tuition is paid in pennies. Hardly can any be so poor as not to afford this means of education. And the largest value of the instruction arises from the fact that it accords with well established pedagogical principles---it keeps its teaching in line with commonest human interests."

CHAPTER VI

TOMORROW'S NEWSPAPER

What America will read in the newspaper of the future largely depends upon the quality of judgment shown by editors as they try to determine how to protect their financial interests and hold the readers as well. Numerous possibilities confront the editors, not the least of which is government censorship. Freedom of the press may be at stake for the editors, especially as the newspaper continues to add to its features and duties. This chapter will be an effort to show probable future tendencies of the newspaper by enumerating some points of present newspaper policy, the possibility of censorship, and forecast what we may expect the newspaper to be like within a few years. These points are expressed by Willard Grosvenor Bleyer.¹

In metropolitan areas, which usually are covered by from two to ten newspapers, distinct present tendencies must be noted. The space and prominence given to non-news features designed to entertain, particularly by evening papers, has tended to limit the amount of space available for news. It has even been asserted that, since the same news is usually available to all papers published in the same city, non-news features that entertain or give practical advice and useful information constitute the distinctive, circulation-building part of each paper. Thus the secondary

¹ Newspaper Writing and Editing (Revised edition), page 370 ff.

function has taken on considerable importance as a means of securing and holding readers.²

The so-called "coloring" or "shading" of news which is discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis, is in the same category as the suppression of news. It is possible to change the facts more or less completely so that a story not only is incomplete but produces a false impression on the mind of the reader. The sin is then no longer one of omission; it becomes one of commission. To belittle the campaign of the opposing political party, newspapers have misrepresented the size of political meetings, the enthusiasm of the audiences, the arguments of the speakers, and in general the success of the efforts to win votes. Candidates, likewise, have been assailed and misrepresented in news stories. It is possible for the newspaper to make it appear, further, that the general public demands certain governmental acts, whereas figures might prove opposite desires on the part of the public. If the readers do want "colored" news in such cases, are editors justified in departing from the truth in order to satisfy them?³

Reformers in some cities have declared that local newspapers have refused to give publicity to campaigns against graft and vice because the exposure of such conditions, the publishers said, would reflect upon the reputation of the city and would hurt business. Others have said that newspapers have reported and upheld investigations of municipal corruption as long as those affected by

2 Ibid., page 378.

3 Ibid., pages 386-7.

such exposure were persons of little influence or importance in the community, and that as soon as more important business interests were threatened by the investigations, the attitude of the newspapers changed completely. Any influence that tends to affect the accuracy of statements concerning current events thereby tends to affect the basis underlying the opinions of the voters. Upon the accuracy of the newspapers in matters of news, therefore, depends to a great extent the character of our government.⁴

A condition over which the editor does not always have immediate control, of course, is that the reporter may fail in his duties. He is not justified in defending his failure to get and present the truth and the whole truth on the ground that as long as a story is interesting it makes little difference whether or not it is entirely true. Newspaper "faking" often appeals to the young reporter as clever and commendable, particularly when he hears older newspapermen tell stories of successful "fakes." "It's only a newspaper story" as a euphemism for "It's untrue" expresses the all too common attitude of readers who doubt the accuracy of the press. From whatsoever point of view "faking" is regarded, therefore it is indefensible. It hurts the guilty writer; it hurts the victim of the "fake;" it hurts the newspaper that published it; it hurts journalism generally. Mr. Bleyer observes that it is a definite precept of newspaper critics that headlines should not comment on the news; such comments should

be made in the editorial columns, they feel. In Chapter II, written chiefly concerning headlines, this thesis attempts to show that many headline writers today stray from the path indicated as the best one. Possibly the tendency is one of the more recent changes in newspaper style as a whole.⁵

"Yellow journalism," discussed in Chapter IV, it is conceded, has been developed largely by furnishing the readers with sensational phases of the day's events. Sensational news stories of all kinds have constantly been "played up" prominently; when the facts were not particularly unusual or striking, they have been "colored" to seem so. The forces that make for suppression and the "coloring" of news, critics of newspapers assert, as well as for the restriction of editorial independence, are the result of the changes in business and editorial management during the last seventy-five years. The charge is made that too many newspapers are "edited from the counting room." Business interests, it is said, particularly those of advertisers, influence directly or indirectly news stories and editorials. Big business through numerous publicity promotions is trying to shape public opinion by sending material to papers in the guise of news. So-called "yellow journalism," critics point out, furnishes another example of the commercializing of the press, because, in order to increase their circulation and profits, the publishers of "yellow" journals pander to their readers' cravings for the sensational. That readers have such cravings seems to be proved by the fact that "yellow"

5 Ibid., pages 312 and 393.

journals do return huge profits to their publishers.⁶

On the other hand, it is exceedingly unfortunate that the rapidly increasing cost of newspaper production has reduced the margin of profit in newspaper publishing to a point where the loss of any considerable amount of advertising or other support means financial failure. Under such circumstances, some publishers have yielded to pressure from various interests and have made concessions which doubtless they would not have given had they been in positions of greater financial independence. Whatever explanation is offered for deliberate failure to give newspaper readers the truth, it must not be regarded as condoning the offense, however great or slight.⁷

With increasing complexities, then, arising in the business of publishing a newspaper, does it not seem very likely that outside influence will be brought to bear in regulation of the great industry of "telling the world what's going on?" News adulterated or "colored" may finally be considered as harmful to the opinions of newspaper readers as impure and poisonous food is to their physical constitutions. Before pure food legislation prohibited adulteration, coloring, and misbranding of foods, the buyer was at the mercy of the unscrupulous manufacturer, just as the newspaper reader is at the mercy of the unscrupulous newspaper maker. Some of the licenses taken by newspapers were discussed in Chapter V.

A generation ago the government regulation of railroad rates,

⁶ Ibid., pages 383-388.

⁷ Ibid., page 391.

foodstuffs, and the conduct of business would have been regarded as unjustifiable interference with personal liberty. Today any government interference with newspapers is considered as an attack on the freedom of the press. Is it not possible that the next generation may see every newspaper of this country compelled by public opinion, if not by legislation, to give complete unbiased reports of all events of general interest? In view of governmental censorship and propaganda, may it not be necessary to demand additional guarantees, national and inter-national, for the freedom of the press to secure and publish the truth?⁸

We may now consider some of the possibilities which await the newspaper of the future. We have seen a rapidly developing newspaper during the last few years, an industry which has seen as many revolutions as almost any other, but the newspaper may now be at the crossroads with several paths beckoning. Some newspapers already represent widely differing types in addition to the fact that some are metropolitan, some small town dailies and others distinctly country weeklies. At least four possibilities awaiting the newspaper will be discussed here. These possibilities are not parallel in nature. First, the newspaper may take on more characteristics of the magazine. Second, it may become almost like a court record or a current events paper. Third, the time may come when only one newspaper will serve a large territory. Fourth, newspapers may be forced to declare

8 Ibid., page 389.

their alignments, political and otherwise, with the result that each will be little more generally powerful than a religious organ.

Nearly all newspapers now devote far more space to articles on every subject under the sun than they do to news. However large the newspaper may be, it is likely to devote only the front page and possibly the second and third to news developments. The roost already has begun to approach the magazine in style and form. Everything from fiction to recipes for cooking may be found in most newspapers. It is becoming increasingly apparent, further, that newspapers are not dead a few hours after publication. The old saying that "nothing is so dead as yesterday's newspaper" is probably more nearly untrue now than ever before. Of course, the newspaper files are useful for the news which has been printed, but they are more useful and valuable for articles other than news. Records of all sorts may be preserved in the newspaper files, sports results in particular. Newspapers appropriate huge sums for feature services which furnish articles on almost any subject and pictures from all over the world. And, although "yellow journalism" is one of the big selling points in tabloid newspapers, a large measure of their success is due to illustrations. Records of events through their pictures present another reason that newspapers of today are not useless tomorrow.

Primarily one may suppose that magazines are published chiefly for the fiction which they contain, and newspapers are printed for the news they furnish their readers. But the fact that their fields are rapidly approaching and overlapping each

other cannot be denied. The newspaper of today always carries at least one continued story and some carry several. The newspaper now specializes in a type of special article such as only magazines carried until a few years ago. This month's magazine may carry a special article on cooking recipes. But just as good recipes are published in the newspapers. Special articles on bridge playing appear in both. Political writers give their views, labeled as such, in both magazine and newspaper. In contrast, the magazine constantly strives for timely articles on news subjects. A little more preparation on these is necessary, but undoubtedly the magazine is speeding up its work. Both magazines and newspaper, however, carry many "advance" stories. They are written some weeks or months ahead and appear as though written only a few days before the magazine appears or the newspaper goes to press. All in all, there is evident a tendency toward assimilation of the newspaper to the magazine.

Referring to "yellow journalism" and tabloid newspapers again, we may find such license in the journalistic field has developed that strict curtailment of the newspaper's duties may result. That it has not been censored as yet by the government is no guarantee that no meddling is contemplated. Authorities may eventually examine newspapers as they now examine foods. Newspapers may be required to stamp their news as carefully as other companies stamp meats and vegetables. The newspaper may continue to sell cheaper articles, but not in disguise. Just as manufacturers are forced to stamp artificial butter as "oleomargarine,"

so may editors be required to state definitely in their newspapers that a certain story is Democratic publicity and propaganda and not the strictly non-partisan view of a reporter without prejudice. Perhaps one of the most rigidly edited newspapers in the country is the United States Daily (Washington, D. C.) which purports to publish nothing but the news as though it were a mere record. The newspaper carries advertising, but circulation prices are greater than those usually charged. Probably few such newspapers could exist, and certainly none could in small cities and towns. Perhaps we may eventually expect such censorship of the news as we now have for moving pictures. In that event most states would regulate their newspapers and bar from the state those which were considered below par. The very size of this task, however, appears too great for its practicability. Is it not a greater possibility, though, that the newspaper industry may some day select a general head of affairs such as the country's greatest sport, baseball, has in Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, or the moving picture industry has in Will H. Hays? Such regulatory measures as these "referees" would make might do much toward stabilizing the whole industry. It is significant that editors the country over, however, have in the main joined hands either through the American Newspaper Publishers Association, The Associated Press, The United Press, The North American Newspaper Alliance or a similar organization to work for the common good of the newspaper, and are meeting their problems in a much better and more organized fashion.

Transportation's more or less successful war on time has made it possible for newspapers in metropolitan areas to cover such large sections that small town dailies are meeting with increasingly great problems. Not only can the large newspaper furnish a far greater digest of world, national, and state news, with all their additional features, but the metropolitan dailies also are so well fortified with correspondents that they may "scoop" the small town newspapers in the latter's own districts. Strictly local news, of course, will receive greater "play" in the local newspapers, but having that long advantage gives the larger papers a decided edge over the smaller group. Small cities now are generally served by one newspaper in place of two or three as was the case ten years ago. Country weeklies survive, but their purpose is far different from that of the small city and town newspapers. Distribution by fast train and mail truck service over a wide area had enabled metropolitan papers to beat the small town newspapers on all but strictly local news; and so, if the latter papers are to continue in operation, they must find something in addition to that in order to gain and hold subscribers. Figures taken from the World Almanac (1931) show a decrease in daily papers from 2,314 in 1923 to 2,265 in 1927 as compared to a circulation of 42,343,210 in 1927 and a circulation of 35,733,107 in 1923. Thus, though the newspapers are fewer in number, their circulation has increased twenty per-cent. It is also stated by the World Almanac that in 1914 there were 31,612 newspaper establishments as compared with two-thirds that number, 22,542, in 1927. Another comparison shows that the

total of newspapers gained from 2,388 in 1928 to 2,392 in 1929, a total of four.

Politically, few really independent newspapers exist. There are those, however, which claim to have no political affiliations whatsoever and which claim absolute fairness in all matters. Nearly all newspapers are aligned with one political party or another, and each takes a definite stand one way or another in city politics. Where these alignments are not openly professed, they are likely to be just that much more partisan in reality. At one time or another in the future, newspapers may be required to make known all affiliations and take a definite stand on all matters. In so doing, they will approach in effectiveness fraternal and religious publications. Then their "coloring" or "shading" of news will be clearly recognizable. This last possibility seems the least probable of the four enumerated.

Whatever the future of the newspaper may be, however, it seems certain to be always a powerful influence. Its scope may continue to widen toward a farther horizon or its effects may be limited to a narrow range, but in the words of Wendell Phillips, over a generation ago, in speaking of the importance of newspapers in this country: "It is a momentous, yes, a fearful truth, that millions have no literature, no schools, almost no pulpit but the press. It is parent, school, college, pulpit, theatre, example, counselor, all in one. Let me make the newspapers, and I care not who makes the religion or the laws."⁹

⁹ Ibid., page 380.

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APPENDIX TO THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The newspapers consulted in preparation of this thesis were, except where otherwise specified, issues of February, March, April and May of 1931. Selections were made at random from the following:

Beacon, Wichita, Kansas.

Capital, Topeka, Kansas.

Gazette, Berkeley, California.

Journal, Salina, Kansas.

Journal-Post, Kansas City.

Journal-World, Lawrence, Kansas.

News, Detroit.

News, Hutchinson, Kansas.

Republican, Springfield, Massachusetts.

Rocky Mountain News, Denver.

Star, Kansas City.

Sun, Baltimore.

Sun, Parsons, Kansas.

Times, Kansas City.

Times, New York.

Transcript, Boston.